

STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO THE KILLING OF FIVE CHILDREN

It is with the deepest sadness that Federal Defender Services of Eastern Tennessee offers its support to the students, staff, and broader Austin East community as we cannot ignore that five more Black lives were lost much too soon. We mourn the lifetimes that will never be. We implore our entire community to give this disquieting reality the attention it requires.

As Bryan Stevenson put it, “The smog created by racial inequality begins to compromise our health.” We recognize that racial injustice pervades our educational and criminal justice structures, making the world less safe for Black children and Black families, certainly compromising their health. It is critical to prioritize transparency and accountability so that we can begin to lift the smog of racial injustice and foster a future of true equanimity wherein diversity can thrive. We mourn with Austin East for the loss of these precious lives, and we stand by you as you find your footing to keep marching on this difficult journey.

April 21, 2021