



## Tribute to John Lewis

Dear colleague,

Last month, we lost two renowned and revered civil rights icons. Reverend CT Vivian and Congressman John Lewis were promoters of race equity and protectors against racial injustice. These were ordinary men with an extraordinary call to purpose. Both died, continuing to fight for the vision of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr – a world in which people are judged by the content of their character, rather than the color of their skin. While their voices have been quieted, their legacies endure and compel us to eradicate racism in all of its forms.

At the department, this work has been underway since September 2018. As I've shared with you before, our data shows that Black families are overrepresented in child welfare and child protection. They are more often penalized for actions related to poverty, not abuse, and yet they experience removal, short stays and prolonged permanency plans at a disproportionately high rate. Our first, critical step was [acknowledging](#) the disparities, which we did in late 2018.

This past May, I sent an all staff email publicly declaring that Black lives matter at DCF and [detailing our race equity work](#), to date. I also asked you to send me your ideas and suggestions. From those thoughtful submissions, we created a [Race Equity webpage](#) that includes information about our equity initiatives, studies and articles about racism, as well as antiracism resources for staff and stakeholders. We've also created a [Race Equity publications page](#) and [Instagram album](#), with program and service information relevant to Black families.

At Congressman Lewis' memorial, former President Barack Obama told viewers that the way to honor his life and legacy is through meaningful action to end racism. I agree. As we at DCF continue to explore new opportunities to correct centuries-old inequities, we'll learn more and do better.

Please check out our webpage and continue to send us your suggestions at [Race.Equity@dcf.nj.gov](mailto:Race.Equity@dcf.nj.gov).

Stay safe and be well.  
Christine