



BARRY H. OSTROWSKY
President and Chief Executive Officer

During the past few days, our organization has found itself at the center of a controversy – one that has caused an understandable and impassioned reaction from many members of our diverse communities. Since last Wednesday, I have heard from many of you – employees, community leaders, members of law enforcement, physicians, educators, elected officials and citizens of New Jersey – expressing your thoughts around a statement made by one of our leaders, Ms. Michellene Davis.

As part of its strategic vision, RWJBarnabas Health endeavors to claim a leadership position on those social issues that impact the health of our state – poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, unsafe housing stock and, of course, violence in all its forms. We have taken this approach, not because it is easy, but because we believe that only by confronting and addressing these very complex issues through constructive dialogue among all parties, can we fulfill our mission.

While I do not plan to address the specifics around the actions of Ms. Davis in this communication, I will say that I do believe the apology for her initial statement to be sincere. It has never been a question that RWJBarnabas Health is indebted to the law enforcement community and those officers who work to make our communities safe each day. The issue of violence in our community is real and the toll that has been taken – particularly in our urban communities – is reflective of a true public health crisis. I believe this, Ms. Davis believes this, and members of law enforcement with whom I have spoken believe this. It is from this position of commonality that we should and must start, if we are to move forward as a state and health system.

Last week, Ms. Davis was placed on administrative leave. Leaves such as these are standard practice for complex organizations like RWJBH to provide the opportunity to review all events which have occurred. With this process, RWJBarnabas Health has been reviewing its social media policy to reinforce the delineation between expressions of personal views by staff and those of official positions, with the intention that this will limit the potential for misunderstandings. As we have now concluded this internal review, I am confident that Ms. Davis remains the proper executive to lead the Social Impact and Community Investment practice for RWJBarnabas Health.

For any meaningful change to occur around stemming the proliferation of violence in our community, *all* members of our community must be active and committed partners – parents, law enforcement, policy makers and health professionals included. Over the past days, I have received support from many law enforcement leaders from across the region who have agreed to partner with RWJBH to continue this meaningful dialogue and develop strategies to curb violence in our communities.

I trust that all parties will take the learnings from these past few days and use them as a foundation for positive change and a refocusing of our collective efforts to make New Jersey a healthier, safer place to reside and thrive.