Dear Staff, Faculty, and Peers,

Nearly one year ago, our group wrote a statement to the student body addressing the heartbreaking video showing George Floyd being murdered by Minneapolis Police Officer Derek Chauvin. Today, we are grateful to be able to write to you all to acknowledge that Chauvin has rightfully been found guilty on all three counts brought against him for the death of George Floyd. However, while this is one step towards promoting police accountability for unjustifiable acts taken against members of our community, we still have a long way to go to better our criminal justice system and correct the issues of police brutality in our country. Today’s verdict will undoubtedly bring a small sigh of relief to our community and to George Floyd’s family, but we must also acknowledge that convictions will not bring back those tragically killed at the hands of police officers. We must continue to work to address the disparities in our nation in order to prevent and reduce such awful violence and hatred towards Black people in our society.

We cannot write this statement without also acknowledging the tragic murder of Ma’Khia Bryant that occurred yesterday, nor the recent killings of Duante Wright and Adam Toledo not too long before that. Unfortunately, our community was afforded just a few minutes to celebrate one victory before being thrust into the reality that our fight for justice and equity is far from done.

We want to re-share a few words that we wrote to you last May as they still ring true today in light of recent events:

Times like these are reminders of why many of us came to UMN Law—to become lawyers and excite the change we wish to see in our society. It is all of our responsibility to make our voices heard against the injustice of the unchecked bias and brutality in our policing culture. There is a long way to go in our fight for equality, but we can all play part in paving the way for a more just and compassionate society. As future lawyers, we have the unique ability to not only change the systemic policies, laws and regulations that encourage the disparity that many of us face, but we can also reshape the climate of race-relations [and racial equity] for our future generations.

As Black law students at the University of Minnesota, what we ask of you today is that you commit to speaking out against bias, racism, and inequity in all of its forms; not only in the law school, but in your work spaces, your friend groups, your homes, and in institutions that negatively impact Black members of our community. We all need to work together to confront the existing inequities in our society and help bring about change that is long overdue.

Sincerely,
BLSA