

Official Statement From SkillsUSA Executive Director Chelle Travis on SkillsUSA's Commitment to Our Members

Dear SkillsUSA Family,

The painful events of the last two weeks — which represent a far longer history of social injustice to members of the Black community — should remind each of us of our shared responsibility to stand against the cruel and debilitating impact of racism and discrimination in all its many forms. To our SkillsUSA members who are part of the Black community, your lives matter, and we stand with you in solidarity and support.

I want you to know that I fully embrace my responsibility as the leader of this organization to provide a safe, empathetic, respectful, and supportive SkillsUSA work and learning environment for each one of you every day.

SkillsUSA has been inspiring positive life changes for members since 1965, but sometimes societal situations like those we're now witnessing call for a renewed commitment and expression of our core values. Those values form the foundation of SkillsUSA's mission: to empower our members to become world-class workers, leaders and responsible American citizens. That empowerment begins when our members know — beyond a shadow of a doubt — what the organization they're a part of stands for. That's why it's our responsibility to make it irrefutably clear that SkillsUSA utterly rejects racism in all its forms.

We reject — and stand against — any behaviors that fuel the vicious and self-defeating cycle of discrimination, hatred, oppression and violence, as well as practices that perpetuate systemic and structural inequities.

Making that position clear is where the empowerment begins, but it continues through our programs and curricula. An essential element of the SkillsUSA Framework, for example, is multicultural sensitivity and awareness. We must make it clear these are indeed “essential elements” of our core value system as an organization. As builders of tomorrow's workforce and shapers of our future citizens and communities, it is our responsibility to ensure that our actions are intentional in creating an environment where the seeds of racism and discrimination cannot find fertile ground in which to grow.

My commitment to you, our members, is that we will continue to proudly embrace that responsibility. Further, we will commit ourselves to identify areas where we can improve as an organization, from how the national office operates internally to the

types of programs and experiences we deliver to our students and advisors. We will hold ourselves accountable for ensuring — through actions, not just words — that we are living up to our diversity and inclusion statement, which is as follows:

“In keeping with a tradition of respect for the individuality of our members and our role in workforce development, SkillsUSA strives to ensure inclusive participation in all of our programs, partnerships and employment opportunities. SkillsUSA’s diversity encompasses differences in ethnicity, gender, language, age, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, physical and mental ability, thinking styles, experience and education. We strive to make all members, partners and employees feel welcomed and valued in the SkillsUSA family. SkillsUSA believes in treating all people with respect and dignity. We want SkillsUSA to be regarded as a ‘membership organization of choice’ — one that encourages all individuals to be involved.”

True change will only come when, one-by-one, we accept our responsibilities to create positive environments of inclusion and support wherever we are and whenever we can. I assure you that SkillsUSA will live up to its responsibility, and we welcome your ideas and suggestions along the way. With your help, we will continue to change lives for the better as we build a diverse, highly skilled workforce all Americans can be proud of and communities where we all feel safe, empowered, valued, and respected.

Chelle Travis
SkillsUSA National Executive Director