



JULY 1, 2020

STATEMENT FROM ESSENCE COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

ESSENCE reiterates its commitment to Black women, our communities and our employees. That commitment has been continually evidenced not just by our words, but by our actions fighting for, celebrating and investing in our community and each other over decades.

ESSENCE is grateful and proud that efforts we have supported and amplified to protect Black women and promote women's rights have opened up more opportunities for more of our voices to be heard and for more changes to be made. We take our role in advancing these efforts internally and externally very seriously.

It is of critical importance to us that there is no doubt or question about who we are, what we represent and what we believe in.

Monday, in step one, we [addressed and refuted](#) the accusations made in an anonymous blog post, as well as discussed our ongoing transition in rebuilding the business. Yesterday, in step two, we addressed more of the action we are taking to further ensure that ESSENCE is the safe haven that we all expect. Out of an abundance of caution and an unwavering commitment to transparency, ESSENCE is in the process of hiring law firms and other independent external experts to assess and review the company's policies and practices and conduct comprehensive employee interviews, as well as independently review any harassment, discrimination, retaliation or other behaviors or issues that may adversely impact workplace culture.

To further foster the transparency we practice and value as well as to provide necessary confidence to our employees and community that the process will be conducted in a fair and independent fashion, we shared with our staff yesterday that Caroline Wanga, who joined ESSENCE on June 29 as its new Chief Growth Officer, will step in as interim CEO of Essence Communications, Inc. to work with team leads across the organization and run day-to-day operations, as well as oversee the independent review process. Following the departure of the company's long-time former CEO in March, Richelieu Dennis assumed temporary leadership as the company launched a new CEO search, a process subsequently delayed by COVID-19. To reinforce the fairness of the review process, Dennis has appointed Wanga to formally serve in an interim CEO capacity during the independent review and until a permanent CEO is identified.

At ESSENCE, we remain committed to fostering a safe, transparent and respectful workspace for everyone. Our decision to commission an independent review is to ensure the ongoing trust of our communities and employees. The findings will help guide us as we continue to stand strong in our work to create the healthiest workplace possible. #BlackWomenRiseTogether

###