



Statement on Diversity, Inclusion & Democracy

For over 170 years, the Co-operative Movement has stood for ideals of democracy, empowerment and inclusion — ideals that are at the heart of America’s journey as a nation, and that we continue to strive toward today. From our beginnings, co-ops have celebrated human diversity and worked to bring people together to meet our needs and achieve our aspirations. In short, we believe that we are better when we are welcoming, when we lift one another up, and when we work together to make life better for everyone.

In keeping with the Principles of the International Co-operative Alliance, our food co-ops work to ensure that our doors are open to all persons, “without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.” As community-owned enterprises, we value respectful dialog, debate, and participation as expressions of economic democracy. As organizations of people who depend on a healthy planet to survive and thrive, we are committed to the development of policies and strategies that will sustain our communities over time.

Today, we are witnessing levels of political, social, and economic division that we believe do not reflect our ideals as a nation. While we honor differences of opinion, we are concerned that actions made by the current administration are fundamentally at odds with American Principles of democracy, diversity and inclusion, as well as the Co-operative Values of equality, solidarity, and caring for others. Specifically, we are seeing initiatives that we believe undermine human rights, immigration policies that exclude people based on their origins and religious beliefs, and initiatives that undercut efforts to slow climate change.

In this context, we reaffirm our commitment to being not just welcoming businesses, but empowering community enterprises. We seek to be positive resources and influences, presenting opportunities for constructive dialogs and collective actions for change. And we will explore ways that we can reach beyond our walls, advocating for policies that will contribute to democracy and equality, advance human rights, and support environmental sustainability.

As a federation of community-owned food co-ops, we seek to empower people to enjoy healthier lives, build stronger local communities, and provide good jobs. We advocate for a deeper sense of corporate social responsibility that includes democratic ownership, the full expression of human diversity and the needs of future generations. In taking this stand, we acknowledge that we can always do better and must challenge ourselves to live up to our Values and Principles. By working together, we believe that we can help build stronger communities, a more inclusive nation, and a better world for everyone.

**The Board of Directors & Staff of the Neighboring Food Co-op Association
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