

EATON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

JUNE 17, 2020

RESOLUTION TO DECLARE RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Introduced by Commissioner Joseph Brehler

Commissioner Brehler moved for the approval of the following resolution. Seconded by Commissioner Haskell.

WHEREAS, race is a social construction with no biologic basis, a social system with multiple dimensions, including individual racism, which is internalized or interpersonal; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism is institutional or structural, a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and depletes the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources; and

WHEREAS, racism is rooted in the foundation of America for more than 400 years. From the time chattel slavery began in the 1600s, to the Jim Crow era, to the declaration of the war on drugs that which has led to the mass incarceration of Black people, racism has remained a presence in American society while subjecting Black people to hardships and disadvantages in every aspect of life; and

WHEREAS, racism, including unconscious and conscious bias, causes persistent racial discrimination in Criminal Justice, Social Capital, Voter Suppression, Education, Transportation, Employment, Food Access, Mental Health and Health Behaviors, Socioeconomic Status, Environmental Exposure, Access to Health Services, and Public Safety; and

WHEREAS, historical racism in Michigan has impacted Black Michiganders including Black Eaton County residents. Discriminatory housing practices in the 20th century, known as redlining, and discriminatory housing covenants contributed to the segregation of the Black community. Black citizens across the state of Michigan have been limited to areas with restricted access to healthy foods, lack of clean water, and other essential resources, leading to a variety of health issues, including reduced life expectancy, higher rates of infant and maternal mortality, and higher rates of lead poisoning; and

WHEREAS, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, Black people have higher incidence of chronic illnesses than other races causing them to die from COVID-19 at 3.8 times the rate of white people; and

WHEREAS, Black people are disproportionately suffering in-part due to these long standing, unaddressed health disparities as a result of systemic racism and other socioeconomic inequities. Indicators of health disparities include Black infant mortality, which is 12.9 percent compared to White infant mortality at 6.4 percent; prevalence of diabetes, which is 17.5 percent for Blacks

compared to 7.7 percent for Whites; and 20 percent of Black residents state that they lack access to health care; and

WHEREAS, there is clear data to illustrate that racism negatively impacts the lives of Black people in Eaton County and the privileges that other Americans experience inhibit them from fully understanding how racism impacts Black people in America – for example the performance of simple tasks like driving while Black, walking/running in neighborhoods, wearing a hoodie, going to the store, or just going to a park all come with certain risk not experienced by others. Concerned parents prepare their Black youth at an early age by having “The Talk” with their children in order to attempt to protect them; and

WHEREAS, the American Public Health Association, National Association of County and City Health Officials, and the American Academy of Pediatrics have declared racism as a public health crisis, this Board believes that now is the time to do the same. The disparities caused by racism that we have outlined in this resolution represent a public health crisis which affects us all; and

WHEREAS, we as a governmental body have a responsibility to ensure an optimal quality of life for all of our Black Eaton County residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Eaton County Board of Commissioners hereby declares racism as a public health crisis that affects all members of our society on a local (urban and rural), state, and national level and demands action from all levels of government and society.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Eaton County Board of Commissioners advocates for relevant policies that improve health in the Black community, and support local, state, and federal initiatives that advance social justice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Eaton County will assess its local ordinances, health regulations and internal policies and procedures to ensure racial equity and promote diversity as core elements in all organizational decision-making.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Eaton County Board of Commissioners calls upon all members of the community to come together to work toward achieving community-oriented solutions to address the legacy of racial injustices faced by Black communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Board of Commissioners urges other governmental bodies to declare racism as a public health crisis and to immediately take steps to intentionally address and support methods that will strategically reduce the long-term impact of systemic racism.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners requests that the County Clerk forward copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Michigan, Eaton County’s State Legislative delegation, the Michigan Association of Counties, Barry-Eaton District Health Department, the Michigan Association of Local Public Health, Community Mental Health Authority – Clinton, Eaton and Ingham Counties, the Community Mental Health Association of Michigan and local units of government within Eaton County. Carried.

STATE OF MICHIGAN

COUNTY OF EATON

I certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate copy of the resolutions adopted by the Eaton County Board of Commissioners, that such resolutions were duly adopted at a regular meeting held on June 17, 2020, and that notice of such meeting was given as required by law.

Diana Bosworth, Clerk of the Eaton
County Board of Commissioners

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