

**DRAFT  
RESOLUTION  
2020 DECLARATION  
BY THE HAMILTON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
THAT RACISM IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

WHEREAS, public health is the science of protecting and improving the health of people, entire populations and their communities. Public health professionals try to prevent problems from happening or recurring through implementing educational programs, recommending policies, administering services, and limiting health disparities thru the promotion of equitable and accessible healthcare<sup>1</sup>;

WHEREAS, racism and segregation in Ohio and Hamilton County have exacerbated a health divide resulting in Black Ohioans having lower life expectancies than White Ohioans; being far more likely than other races to die prematurely (before the age of 75); and to die of heart disease or stroke, according to the Health Policy Institute of Ohio. Black Ohioans also have higher levels of infant mortality, lower birth weights, are more likely to be overweight or obese, have adult diabetes, and have long-term complications from diabetes. A contemporary example of such disparity is highlighted by preliminary data in Ohio that suggest African Americans are dying at a disproportionately higher rate from the coronavirus<sup>2,3</sup>;

WHEREAS, infant mortality is often considered to be one of the most important indicators of the overall health and well-being of a community the stress of racism is called out as a key driver of infant mortality in the County's collaboratively developed strategic plan to reduce infant deaths. Regardless of socioeconomic status, Black babies born in Hamilton County are more than twice as likely to die before their first birthday compared to White babies. From 2014 to 2018, 67 percent of sleep-related deaths were to Black infants which was over 2.5 times higher than White children, 10 times higher than non-Hispanic multi-racial children, and nearly 40 times higher than Hispanic children <sup>4,5</sup>.

WHEREAS, oral health is essential to overall health and quality of life. The same health disparities document in medical health care are magnified in oral health. A person's ability to access oral health care is associated with factors such as education level, income, race, and ethnicity. From 2013-2015, 11.9 percent of third graders had untreated tooth decay. and the percent of third graders with one or more dental sealants decreased by 14.5 percent. In 2018, there were 11,386 oral health emergency department encounters reported in area hospitals<sup>6</sup>.

WHEREAS, communities of color, those of low social economic status, and those that suffer from disabilities, are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of their social determinants of health — health inequities stemming from economic stability, education, physical environment, food and access to health care systems<sup>7</sup> ;

WHEREAS, race is a social construct with no biologic basis. Racism is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual racism is internalized or interpersonal; systemic racism is institutional or structural, and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks, this unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities, while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources<sup>8,9,10</sup>;

WHEREAS, racism causes persistent racial discrimination influencing many areas of life, including housing, education, employment and criminal justice; and an emerging body of research demonstrates that racism itself is a social determinant of health<sup>11</sup>;

WHEREAS, more than 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes<sup>12</sup>; and

WHEREAS, Hamilton County's responsibilities to address racism include reshaping our discourse and agenda so that we all actively engage in racial justice work and examining systems within our institutions which serve to perpetuate biases and inequitable outcomes;

WHEREAS, Hamilton County has been active for years in promoting health equity within the community through the promotion of tax levies providing for medical care to the indigent, investing in patient navigation

programs for elderly seniors, initiating programming to reduce infant mortality in Hamilton County, addressing issues of oral health which are pervasive within minority communities and chartering the County's first Office of Diversity and Inclusion to promote equitable economic outcomes in County business activity;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Hamilton County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) recognizes racism as public health crisis that affects our entire community;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Hamilton County BOCC will support and promote collaborative health efforts, such Cradle Cincinnati, the Hamilton County Oral Health Coalition, Center for Closing the Health Gap, All-In Cincinnati, and Gen-H that are centering the voice of Black communities in an effort to reduce racial inequities in health. Local hospital systems and foundations are encouraged to continue investments in collaborative efforts that prioritize the closing of racial disparities in health outcomes;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Hamilton County Child Fatality Review and Fetal and Infant Mortality Review processes will work to identify child deaths where the impact of racism played a role.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Hamilton County Oral Health Coalition will address the oral health needs of all citizens of Hamilton County, leveling health disparities, increasing access to care, and ensuring all an equitable opportunity for optimal oral health. It will continue to build on its advocacy efforts to the Ohio Department of Medicaid that have already led to monumental improvements. Among these are streamlined credentialing, improving turn-around times and processing procedures for pre-authorizations and claims data appeals, initiating accountability metrics to ensure Managed Care Organization performance, adding new procedure codes for coverage, and advocating for a State of Ohio Dental Director.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Hamilton County's next Community Health Improvement Plan will prioritize the closing of racial disparities in health outcomes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Hamilton County BOCC will seek to promote racial equity policies that prioritize the health of all people, especially people of color by mitigating exposure to adverse childhood experiences, trauma in childhood, and ensuring implementation of a Health and Equity in All Policies approach to decision-making;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Hamilton County BOCC will work to incorporate the concept of equity into all of its functions as a County government and will seek to build alliances and partnerships with organizations that are confronting racism and encourages other local, state, regional and national entities to recognize racism as a public health crisis;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Hamilton County commits to the expansion of its Office of Economic Inclusion to promote cultural engagement within the Hamilton County community with a focus on connecting vulnerable, minority and poverty stricken communities of Hamilton County to resources within, and outside, of Hamilton County capable of addressing the needs of these communities and more effectively connecting these communities to the work and programming of the County.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Hamilton County BOCC changes the name of Office of Economic Inclusion to Office of Economic Inclusion and Equity.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Hamilton County will, in 2020, begin the process of conducting an economic disparity study to determine whether inequities exist in economic outcomes related to County procurement affecting minorities and women and, if so, to recommend solutions for remedying those inequities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Office of the Hamilton County Sheriff, which as of February 2020 was certified by the Ohio Community Collaborative as having policies and procedures in place which promote best practices in the areas of law enforcement, has committed to the benchmarking of these policies and procedures against other national collaborative agreements;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Office of the Hamilton County Sheriff has committed to Active Bystander training for its officers to ensure that the officers and deputies of the Sheriff's Office are provided the tools and training to effectively speak out against and prevent wrong doing on the job in all instances, but especially during intense and high pressure moments, to ensure the respect and dignity of the human lives with which the office interacts and to ensure the career stability of those who have nobly chosen law enforcement as their profession.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Office of the Hamilton County Sheriff has committed, additionally, to ensure its officers are provided with Implicit Bias training to better understand the unavoidable biases retained by all human beings and the impact of those biases on actions and decisions on the job as well as Crisis Intervention Training to effectively deal with special needs populations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Hamilton County will ensure that the Human Resources Development Training programs of the Board of County Commissioners effectively promote the concept of Active Bystander so that the employees of Hamilton County understand that courageous, outspoken action to prevent harm or wrong doing is an expected part of Hamilton County's culture.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Hamilton County BOCC has partnered with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, a museum that stands as a beacon of light for *inclusive freedom for all*, to create a curriculum for private, public, and nonprofit entities to educate about the historical and systemic effects that racism has on African Americans and people of color and how it robs our country of trust in one another, safety, justice, and accountability.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Hamilton County BOCC encourages all community leaders and stakeholders in the health, education, employment, housing, criminal justice and safety areas to recognize racism as a public health crisis and to implement portions or all of this declaration and to take those actions they can to promote equity within the Hamilton County community

NEED TO INSERT CLERK CERTIFICATION LANGUAGE

### **Sources**

- 1 <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/what-public-health>
- 2 Health Policy Institute of Ohio, 2017 Health Value Dashboard (Health equity profiles).
- 3 <https://www.policymattersohio.org/research-policy/sustainable-communities/health-health-equity/building-ahealthy-ohio>
- 4 Boeshart, T., Carlson, D., Davidson, C.S., Lordo, K.L., Samet, M.J., Does Place Matter? Health Equity in Hamilton County. Hamilton County, Ohio: Hamilton County Public Health, Department of Community Health Services, August, 10, 2015.
- 5 Cradle Cincinnati Annual Report, 2019.
- 6 Hamilton County Oral Health Coalition Strategic Plan and Recommendations, March 2019.
- 7 Healthy People 2020. Social Determinants of Health. Available at: <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health#three>. Accessed June 24, 2020.
- 8 García JJ, Sharif MZ. Black Lives Matter: A Commentary on Race and Racism. Am J Public Health. 2015; 105: e27–e30. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2015.302706)
- 9 Jones CP. Confronting Institutionalized Racism. Phylon. 2002; 50(1/2):7-22.
- 10 American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>. Accessed June 24, 2020.
- 11 Flynn, A., Holmberg, S., Warren, D., and Wong, F. REWRITE the Racial Rules: Building an Inclusive American Economy. Roosevelt Institute, 2016.
- 12 Institute of Medicine. Unequal Treatment. <https://www.nap.edu/read/10260/chapter/2#7>. June 24, 2020.