

Franklin County Commissioners Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis. (Commissioners)

WHEREAS, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners has a demonstrated track record of promoting racial equity, inclusion and diversity in all aspects of county government. This commitment is most recently exemplified in the development and execution of the Franklin County Rise Together Blueprint for Reducing Poverty, the Innovating New Pathways to Shared Prosperity Economic Inclusion Task Force and a historic investment in community-wide racial equity training; and

WHEREAS, these significant initiatives identified racism as a root cause of poverty and constricted economic mobility; and

WHEREAS, race is a social construct with no biological basis¹; and

WHEREAS, racism is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual racism that is internalized or interpersonal; systemic racism that is institutional or structural, and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks²; and

WHEREAS, racism 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 resources³, and Franklin County's collective prosperity depends upon the equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin; and

WHEREAS, racism causes persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes in 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 health⁴; and

WHEREAS, the Franklin County Rise Together Blueprint noted Franklin County's African American residents experience dramatically higher unemployment rates (Overall: 5.7%, African-Americans: 11.1%), face a higher poverty rate as a community (Overall: 16.7%, African-Americans: 29.9%), have lower home ownership rates (Overall: 53.6%, African-

1 Garcia 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

2 Jones CP. Confronting Institutionalized Racism. Phylon. 2002; 50(1/2):7-22.

3 American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>. Accessed May 2, 2020.

4 Flynn, A., Holmberg, S., Warren, D., and Wong, F. REWRITE the Racial Rules: Building an Inclusive American Economy. Roosevelt Institute, 2016.

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Americans: 33.4%), are more likely to live in neighborhoods with low performing schools and experience disproportionately higher incarceration rates (Overall: 223 per 100,000, African-Americans: 637 per 100,000)⁵; and

WHEREAS, through the leadership of the Board of Commissioners, the Franklin County Criminal Justice Planning Board has committed to the elimination of racial disparities in the criminal justice system, to prioritize racial equity in our decision making processes, to acknowledge that communities of color have borne the burdens of inequitable social, environmental, economic, and criminal justice policies practices and investments, to understand that the legacy of these inequitable policies has caused deep disparities, harm, and mistrust, and to recognize that racial equity is realized when and only when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes; and

WHEREAS, racism and segregation in Ohio and Franklin County have also exacerbated a health divide resulting in Black residents having lower life expectancies than White residents; 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 residents 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 diabetes⁶; and

WHEREAS, communities of color, working class residents, 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 systems⁷; and

WHEREAS, a contemporary example of such disparity is highlighted by the coronavirus data in Franklin County that Black residents are hospitalized at twice the rate of other demographic groups and preliminary

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data in Ohio that suggest African Americans are dying at a disproportionately higher rate from the disease^{8 9} ; and

WHEREAS, more than 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes¹⁰; and

WHEREAS, Franklin County Public Health has acknowledged that the health impact of racism in Ohio and Franklin County rises to the definition of a public health crisis proposed by Dr. Sandro Galea who notes: "The problem must affect large numbers of people, it must threaten health over the long-term, and it must require the adoption of large scale solutions."¹¹; and

WHEREAS, the Franklin County Board of Commissioners stands with the residents of Franklin County and our partners at Franklin County Public Health in their declaration of racism as a public health crisis passed by declaration on May 12, 2020; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, FRANKLIN COUNTY, OHIO:

1. Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire county.
2. Work to progress as an equity and justice-oriented organization, with the Board of Commissioners and its staff leadership continuing to identify specific activities to further enhance diversity and to ensure antiracism principles across Board of Commissioners leadership, staffing and contracting.
3. Promote equity through all policies approved by the Board of Commissioners and enhance educational efforts aimed at understanding, addressing and dismantling racism and how it affects the delivery of human and social services, economic development and public safety.

5 American Community Survey 2013 – 2017 5-Year Estimates for Franklin County; Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Annual Survey of Jails (ASJ) and Census of Jails (COJ) 2015 Dataset; Ohio School District Report Card Website – Kirwan analysis).

6 Health Policy Institute of Ohio, 2017 Health Value Dashboard (Health equity profiles).

7/9 <https://www.policymattersohio.org/research-policy/sustainable-communities/health-health-equity/building-a-healthy-ohio>

8 Franklin County Public Health Epidemiology Report, April - May 2020.

10 Institute of Medicine. Unequal Treatment. <https://www.nap.edu/read/10260/chapter/2#7>. May 2, 2020. 10 American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>. Accessed May 2, 2020.

11 Galea, Sandro. Crying "Crisis". Dean's Note. Boston University School of Public Health.

<https://www.bu.edu.sph/2017/04/23/crying-crisis/>.

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4. Continue to advocate locally and through the National Association of Counties for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and supports local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism.
5. Further work to solidify alliances and partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism and encourage other local, state, regional and national entities to recognize racism as a public health crisis.
6. Support community efforts to amplify issues of racism and engage actively and authentically with communities of color wherever they live.
7. To always promote and support policies that prioritize the health of all people, especially people of color by mitigating exposure to adverse childhood experiences.
8. Continue on-going racial equity training with the goal of reaching all BOC agency leadership and staff.
9. Encourage racial equity training among all community partners, grantees, vendors and contractors.
10. Identify clear goals and objectives, including periodic reports to the Board of Commissioners, to assess progress and capitalize on opportunities to further advance racial equity; and

Further resolved, that the Board of Commissioners supports all additional efforts in Franklin County the State of Ohio, and nationwide to address racism and public health disparities due to racial inequities; and, be it

Further resolved, that the Franklin County Board of Commissioners call upon the Governor, the Speaker of the Ohio House, and the Ohio Senate President to join with us to declare racism as a public health crisis and to enact equity in all policies of the state of Ohio.