

NEW HANOVER COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

RESOLUTION

RACISM: A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

WHEREAS, the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners has identified the reduction of Racial inequity as a critical priority and essential to effective and systemic delivery of health and human services in New Hanover County; and

WHEREAS, the American Academy of Pediatrics states Racism is a socially transmitted disease passed down through generations, leading to the inequities observed in our population today; and

WHEREAS, Racism unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities of color, while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities, and diminishes the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources, New Hanover County's collective prosperity depends upon the equitable access to opportunity for every resident; and

WHEREAS, Racism has produced and perpetuates poverty through intentional and unintentional policies that create barriers to economic mobility; and is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual Racism that is internalized or interpersonal, and systemic Racism that is institutional or structural; 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 health; and

WHEREAS, social determinants, conditions in which an individual is born and in which he or she lives, works, learns, or recreates are key drivers of health inequities. For generations, communities of color have faced vast disparities in job opportunities, income, and inherited family wealth. They are less likely to have housing security, access to health insurance, quality schools, healthy food, and green spaces, all of which can undermine physical and mental well-being; and

WHEREAS, it is well-documented that Racism itself has an adverse impact on health. Chronic stress caused by discrimination can trigger a cascade of adverse health outcomes, from high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, immunodeficiency, and accelerated aging, all of which are high in communities of color; and

WHEREAS, in New Hanover County, the greatest disparity in birth weight is among minority newborns. In 2018, 10.3% of Non-Hispanic Black newborns had a low birth weight, followed by 7.7% Hispanic, and 6.4% Non-Hispanic White; and

WHEREAS, diabetes affects minorities disproportionately. New Hanover County resident deaths due to diabetes were 5.5% Hispanic, 4.4% Non-Hispanic Black, and 1.8% Non-Hispanic White; and

WHEREAS, prostate cancer affects minority men disproportionately as well. Deaths due to prostate cancer were 4.4% Non-Hispanic Black, 1.8% Non-Hispanic White, and 1% Hispanic; and

WHEREAS, microaggressions, defined as brief, commonplace, and often daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults have been found to increase suicidal ideation; and

WHEREAS, the American Public Health Association has stated that negative law enforcement encounters among African American youth and men are associated with depression; pregnant African American women experience stress related to the likelihood that their children will have future negative encounters with law enforcement. The homicide rate for African Americans is 12 times that for Non-Hispanic White; and

WHEREAS, the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners stands with the New Hanover County and City of Wilmington Community Relations Advisory Committee, the New Hanover County Commission on African American History, Heritage and Culture, the New Hanover NAACP, the New Hanover County Resiliency Task Force, and all residents of New Hanover County.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the New Hanover County Board of Commissioners believes that Racism has formed the basis for a public health crisis affecting our entire County and should be treated with urgency. This resolution calls upon legislators, health officials, and others in our community to research and analyze data, and make meaningful changes to dismantle systemic Racism. New Hanover County will seek to promote Racial equity through policies approved by the Board of Commissioners and will encourage other local, state and national entities to recognize Racism as a public health crisis and take action.

ADOPTED this the 13th day of July, 2020.

NEW HANOVER COUNTY

Julia Olson-Boseman, Chair

Patricia Kusek, Vice-Chair

Jonathan Barfield, Jr., County Commissioner

Woody White, County Commissioner

Rob Zapple, County Commissioner

ATTEST:

Kymerleigh G. Crowell, Clerk to the Board