

Resolution No. 296-2020

Council Members Griffin, B. Jones and McCormack

AN EMERGENCY RESOLUTION
Declaring racism a public health crisis and establishing a working group to promote racial equity in the City of Cleveland.

WHEREAS, there is clear data that racism negatively impacts the lives of people of color in this City and throughout Cuyahoga County; and

WHEREAS, almost all of the 400 years of black America's experience was under slavery and Jim Crow laws which allowed preferential opportunity to some while at the same time subjected people of color to hardship and disadvantage in all areas of life; and

WHEREAS, still now, racism – not race- causes disproportionately high rates of homelessness, incarceration, poor education and health outcomes, and economic hardship for African Americans; and

WHEREAS, racism acts on systemic, institutional and interpersonal levels, all of which operate throughout time and across generations; and

WHEREAS, this Council believes that the time is *now* to declare racism a public health crisis in our community; and

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization defines “public health” as “the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society” and those efforts “aim to provide conditions under which people can... be healthy, improve their health and well-being, or prevent the deterioration of their health; and

WHEREAS, the United States Office of Disease Prevention recognizes that discrimination negatively impacts health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the Social Determinants of Health – the social and material factors that influence health outcomes - impact life-long outcomes beginning even before birth; and

WHEREAS, the Boston Public Health Commission states that racism impacts Social Determinants of Health, including Social Capital, Education, Transportation, Employment, Food Access, Health Behaviors, Socioeconomic Status, Environmental Exposure, Access to Health Services, Housing, and Public Safety; and

WHEREAS, the negative repercussions of historical racism, including but not limited to discriminatory lending practices of the 20th century known as “redlining,” impact current outcomes regarding access to nutritious food, economic security, educational achievement, rates of lead poisoning, and infant mortality; and

WHEREAS, research indicates that adverse childhood experiences are disproportionately experienced by black children when compared to white children thus having negative impacts on academic, behavioral, and physical health outcomes of black children; and

WHEREAS, statistics show a national disparity between black and white infant mortality rates and the State of Ohio consistently ranks among the worst states concerning black infant mortality rates; moreover, in 2015 Cuyahoga County had the worst black infant mortality rate in the State of Ohio; and

WHEREAS, Cuyahoga County has nearly 12 times as many black youths incarcerated than white youths; and

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WHEREAS, the rate of poverty in the Cleveland metropolitan area for black residents is nearly twice that of white residents, and the median income for white residents is over twice that of black residents; and

WHEREAS, the rates of chronic diseases, including asthma, diabetes, and hypertension, are significantly higher in predominantly black neighborhoods of Cleveland; and

WHEREAS, the life expectancy of black residents of Cleveland is 6 years less than that of their white neighbors; and

WHEREAS, this Council recognizes that racism is a public health crisis that affects all members of our society both on a local level and nationwide and deserves action from all levels of government and civil society; and

WHEREAS, this Council supports the establishment of a working group to address these issues and to: seek solutions to reshape the discourse and actively engage all citizens in racial justice work; continue to work to build alliances with organizations that are confronting racism and encourage partners to recognize racism as a public health crisis; continue to promote racially equitable economic and workforce development in Cleveland; continue to promote racially equitable hiring and promotion of all employees including City employees; and advocate and draft relevant policies that prioritize the health of people of color and mitigate exposure to adverse childhood experiences and trauma in childhood; and

WHEREAS, this resolution constitutes an emergency measure for the immediate preservation of public peace, property, health or safety, now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CLEVELAND:

Section 1. That this Council declares racism to be a public health crisis and will establish a working group to promote racial equity in the City of Cleveland.

Section 2. That the Clerk of Council is directed to transmit copies of this resolution to the NAACP Cleveland Branch, Urban League of Greater Cleveland, YWCA of Greater Cleveland, First Year Cleveland, Birthing Beautiful Communities, and United Way of Greater Cleveland.

Section 3. That this resolution is hereby declared to be an emergency measure and, provided it receives the affirmative vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to Council, it shall take effect and be in force immediately upon its adoption and approval by the Mayor; otherwise it shall take effect and be in force from and after the earliest period allowed by law.

BAG:rns
3/2/2020