

Mecklenburg County

North Carolina

PROCLAMATION DECLARING RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

WHEREAS, the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners has identified Reducing Racial Disparity as a critical priority and essential to an effective systemic response to delivering health and human services in Mecklenburg County; and

WHEREAS, racism unfairly disadvantages Black and Brown individuals and communities, while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities, and Mecklenburg 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, criminal justice practices have caused deep disparities, harm, and mistrust; African American residents of Mecklenburg County are eight times more likely to die of homicide; and 73% of homicide victims were African American in Mecklenburg County; and

WHEREAS, a growing body of literature shows that social determinants — otherwise known as the conditions in which an individual is born and in which he or she lives, works, 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 quality schools, healthy food, and green spaces. This involves systemic racism all of which can undermine mental and physical well-being; and

WHEREAS, in addition 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 the African American community. There is also evidence suggesting that the racism endured by black mothers contributes to the high maternal and infant mortality rate; and

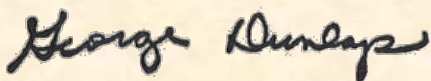
WHEREAS, in Mecklenburg County, the COVID-19 pandemic has made visible and intensified racial health disparities with Black and Brown communities comprising 57% of all COVID-19 cases and 41.2% of coronavirus deaths; and

WHEREAS, Blacks are twice as likely to not have health insurance, 3 times more likely to experience chronic diseases and 70% of new HIV infections; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, the Board of County Commissioners received a report and recommendations on a call to action to eliminate health disparities in Mecklenburg County, yet the rates of disparity have widened.

NOW THEREFORE. BE IT RESOLVED, that the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners believes that racism can form the basis for a public health crisis affecting our entire County and should be treated with the urgency and funding of a public health crisis. Looking at racism in this way offers legislators, health officials, and others an opportunity to analyze data and discuss how to dismantle or change problematic institutions. Mecklenburg 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 as well.

This 16th day of June 2020.



George Dunlap, Chair
Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners

