



Memorandum Date: April 12, 2021

Board Date: April 21, 2021

TO: Board of Commissioners, Sitting also as the Board of Health

DEPARTMENT: Health & Human Services

PRESENTED BY: Kachina Inman, Assistant Director
Dr. Jocelyn Warren Manager, Public Health Division

AGENDA ITEM TITLE: ORDER & RESOLUTION/ In the Matter of Approving and Adopting a Resolution Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis

I. MOTION

In the Matter of Approving and Adopting a Resolution Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis.

II. AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY

This item presents additional information, requested by the Board of Commissioners, related to a recommendation from the Department of Health & Human Services, its Public Health Division and the Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC, LM 3.625) that racism be declared a Public Health Crisis.

III. BACKGROUND/IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION

A. Board Action and Other History

In 2017, Public Health released the first Lane County Health Equity Report. The Report documented health inequities in Lane County among racial and ethnic populations and highlighted the disproportionate burden of disease among communities of color. It also described the connection between poor health and limited social and economic opportunity. In March of 2018, the Public Health Advisory Committee (PHAC) and the Equity & Access Advisory Board (E&AAB) brought the Equity Report to the Lane Equity Coalition. During that forum, community members in small groups discussed a wide array of ideas for eliminating health disparities and advancing health equity in Lane County. A

joint work group of PHAC and E&AAB reviewed the ideas put forward during the forum and developed a set of recommendations which came to the Board in May 2018. In June, the Board passed Order 18-06019-09, “In the Matter of Endorsing Recommendations Related to the Advancement of Health Equity in Lane County.”

In 2020, a PHAC workgroup, Racism & Equity, met regularly to develop a draft resolution declaring racism a public health crisis. They presented the resolution to PHAC and, in December, the PHAC voted to forward the resolution to the Board.

In early 2021, Vice-Chair Farr received a draft resolution to declare racism a public health crisis from individual community members who also support the Board taking action in this area. That draft is also included in this packet.

Policy Issues

There are no negative policy implications as adoption of this Resolution is in alignment with the County’s Goals, Priorities and the Community Health Improvement Plan.

B. Board Goals

Actions taken to identify and address racial and ethnic disparities support: Priority 1 – the promotion of a safe and healthy County, Priority 2 – vibrant communities, and Priority 3 – our people and partnerships.

C. Financial and/or Resource Considerations

There are no specific financial requests as the result of declaring racism a serious threat to the public’s health. Additional resources would expand the capacity and accelerate the pace at which Public Health is able to respond locally, including identifying specific mechanisms and impacts of racism and engaging with impacted individuals and communities to eliminate health disparities.

D. Health Implications

Racism is a system of structures, policies, and practices that assigns value and determines opportunity based on the way people look, including the color of their skin. Racism unfairly advantages some people and disadvantages others. As such, it undermines the realization of the full potential of our whole society through the waste of human potential.

A growing body of research demonstrates that centuries of racism in the United States have had a profound and negative impact on individuals and communities of color; many of these studies have focused specifically on health outcomes. The data show that racial and ethnic minority groups experience higher rates of illness and death across a wide range of health conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, obesity, asthma, and heart disease, when compared to their White peers. Additionally, the life expectancy of Black Americans is four years lower than that of White Americans. The root causes of adverse health outcomes are complex, related, and include racism, economic stability, and access to quality education, healthy foods, and reliable transportation. The disproportionate experience of illness and death during the COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of the institutional failure to address historical and current racism.

E. Analysis

Declaring racism a public health crisis is the first step in confronting institutional racism and the legacy of disadvantage. The American Public Health Association has created an interactive map (<https://www.apha.org/Topics-and-Issues/Health-Equity/Racism-and-health/Racism-Declarations>) showing the health districts, municipalities, and educational service areas that have declared racism a public health crisis or emergency in their jurisdictions nationwide. The Oregon Public Health Association declared racism a public health crisis in June, 2020 and hosted a public forum with Dr. Camara Jones in October, 2020.

Equity and Access has been a key pillar in both the County and H&HS Strategic Plans. The Equity and Access Advisory Board advises the County Administrator on policies and practices surrounding equity, inclusion, and access in both internal and external matters. Most recently, the County has adopted an equity lens when reviewing policies before the Board. H&HS provides critical services to many of our most marginalized communities in Lane County. H&HS has prioritized and will continue to prioritize furthering equity by increasing outreach, engagement and access with our populations and communities experiencing disparities. The declaration would support these efforts by demonstrating County-level leadership consensus about the existence and impacts of racism in the region and signal a commitment to confronting racism and achieving health equity for all residents of Lane County.

F. Alternatives/Options

1. Accept and Approve the proposed Resolution, as presented.
2. Request revisions to the proposed Resolution and Delegate Authority to the Board Chair to Approve the amended Resolution.
3. Give direction for additional study and drafting.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Public Health Advisory Committee, the Equity and Access Advisory Board, and the Lane Equity Coalition recommended declaring racism a public health crisis, as do the community members who submitted their own version of a declaration. The Department of Health & Human Services endorses the Approval of the Resolution on Racism as a Public Health Crisis, as submitted by the Public Health Advisory Committee.

There is considerable overlap between the versions of the declaration presented to the Board. Our recommendation is to adopt the version developed over time with community input and with the community representatives on the advisory boards. The specific actions detailed in the draft submitted to Vice Chair Farr should be considered when developing an implementation plan.

V. TIMING/IMPLEMENTATION

Health & Human Services will partner with the PHAC, the County's Equity and Access Coordinator, and the Lane Equity Coalition, to announce the resolution, with direction from County Administration and the public information office.

VI. FOLLOW-UP

Additional follow-up depends on the direction of the Board and County Administrator. Staff in Public Health report annually on health inequities in Lane County for the Live Healthy Lane Coalition as a regular update to the Community Health Assessment. The Community Health Improvement Plan is in development and may provide an opportunity for the Board to follow up the declaration with specific policy approaches to address current and historical injustices that produce health disparities.

VII. ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution and Order
Draft Community Resolution

BEFORE THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF LANE COUNTY, OREGON
SITTING ALSO AS THE BOARD OF HEALTH

ORDER AND RESOLUTION
NO: 21-04-21-

In the Matter of Approving and Adopting a
Resolution Acknowledging Racism as a
Public Health Crisis

WHEREAS, throughout our nation’s history, slavery, racism and racial injustice have led to deepening racial disparities across all sectors and have had lasting negative consequences for Lane County; and

WHEREAS, the racist history of Oregon in particular, including the presence of the Black exclusion clause in the State’s constitution, has had lasting negative consequences for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (“BIPOC”) communities of the State and Lane County; and

WHEREAS, Lane County has recognized that there is a systemic and prolific nature to racism built into the foundation of the United States and as such these actions go on without recognition and effective adjudication; and

WHEREAS, racism has deep and harmful impacts that unfairly disadvantage members of the BIPOC communities and unfairly advantage people who identify as white; and

WHEREAS, racism and discrimination are linked to adverse health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, members of the BIPOC communities living in Lane County are likely to experience higher rates of chronic disease, COVID-19 infection and hospitalization and poverty, as well as lower rates of high school graduation and lower life expectancy; and

WHEREAS, the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Lane County BIPOC communities is a present-day demonstration of the systemic racism in institutions and systems; and

WHEREAS, it is the mission of Lane County Public Health to promote and protect the long-term health and well-being of individuals, families and our community and the Lane County Board of Health has committed to addressing racial equity and health disparities in all forms and at all levels;

NOW, THEREFORE, The Board of County Commissioners sitting also as the Board of Health, **Orders and Resolves** that the Lane County Board of Health declares that racism is a public health crisis; and

Be it further resolved that the Lane County Board of Health will:

1. Promote active and authentic engagement with BIPOC communities on issues of race, ethnicity and health.
2. Use an equity lens to form policy recommendations that will demonstrably improve health outcomes in Lane County related to race and ethnicity.

3. Obtain and use more meaningful data in order to better tell the story of Lane County's BIPOC communities.
4. Review and regularly evaluate the County's equity and diversity requirements for employees with the goal of ensuring that training is mandatory, comprehensive, relevant, and incorporated into professional development evaluations; as well as to additionally highly encourage training for all those who represent the County in any capacity.
5. Urge other institutions, organizations and governmental bodies to declare racism as a public health crisis and to adopt strategies to reduce the long-term impact of systemic racism.
6. Allocate resources to effectively implement these actions.
7. Provide biannual updates on these actions at Board of Health meetings.

ADOPTED this ____ day of __April__, 2021.

Joe Berney, Chair
Lane County Board of Commissioners

APPROVED AS TO FORM

Date _____

LANE COUNTY OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS IN EUGENE AND LANE COUNTY.

The LANE COUNTY Government finds that:

1. The County's purpose To Improve Lives and values Integrity, Excellence, Equity and Respect for all people. The county's vision of encouraging respect and appreciation for diversity, equity, justice, and social well-being is recognized as the best county to live , work and play.

2. We stand strongly behind the core values of Passion to Serve, Driven To Connect all communities, and steadfast Focus on Solutions making the Lane County a strong caring and valued community.

3. In order to eradicate racism throughout our communities, we must encourage a strong, sustainable and vibrant economy, fully utilizing our educational and cultural assets, so that every person has an opportunity to achieve financial security.

4. The American Public Health Association finds racism to be a barrier to health equity and has named racism a driving force of how these social determinants of health are distributed.

5. Conditions that unfairly advantage some and unfairly disadvantage others. Racism hurts the health of our nation by preventing some people the opportunity to attain their highest level of health.

6. To achieve health equity and to crate the healthiest nation in one generation, we must address injustices caused by racism.

7. A welcoming and inclusive community must support actions at all levels to ensure equal opportunity for all.

8. Racism operates at various levels in society and is a driving force to societal determinants of health, such as housing, education, social mobility, integration, and it is a barrier to health equity.

9. The American Academy of Pediatrics has declared that racism is a barrier to wellness that has a profound impact on the health status of children, adolescents, emerging adults, and their families and that the continued negative impact of racism on health and well-being through implicit and explicit biases, institutional structures, and interpersonal relationships is clear.

10. The United States Office of Disease Prevention recognizes that racial discrimination negatively impacts health outcomes.

11. The American College of Physicians has found that African-Americans, Latinos/Latinx in particular are at risk of being subjected to discrimination and violence against them because of their race and ethnicity, endangering them and even costing them their lives.

12. The non-partisan National Partnership for Women and Families has found that in the United States, health and racism are inextricably linked, creating a harmful impact on individuals and BiPOC, communities of color, including unequal access to quality education, employment, livable wages, healthy food, stable and affordable housing, and safe and sustainable communities.

13. The American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Family Physicians have declared hate crimes a public health concern.

14. The Social Determinants of Health, defined as the social and material factors that influence health, including employment, housing, education, health care, public safety, and food access are known to impact life-long health outcomes beginning even before birth.

15. Health equity is defined as all residents having the opportunity to attain their highest level of health.

16. Inequities are created when barriers prevent individuals and communities from accessing these conditions and reaching their full potential.

17. The U.S. National Institutes of Health reports that multiple studies suggest that experiences of racism or discrimination raise the risk of emotional and physical health problems, including depression, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and even death.

18. Longstanding structural racism and inequity contribute to a range of risk factors that make Latinx/ Latino/ indigenous and Black Americans more likely to contract and die from COVID-19.

19. Black people and Latinos are four times more likely than white people to be hospitalized for COVID-19, and Black people are twice as likely as white people to die of the virus, according to a report published by the National Urban League.

20. Racial disparities in educational attainment in Lane County are largely a result of historic policies dating back to Oregon's exclusion laws.

21. The negative repercussions of historical racism, including but not limited to racist federal housing policies and discriminatory lending practices of the 20th century known as “redlining,” continue to negatively impact:

(a) Access to nutritious food Latino and Black communities , which contributes to higher rates of Type II Diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and obesity;

(b) Economic security for Latino and Black residents, who are more likely to live in neighborhoods with less access to traditional banking institutions and high numbers of payday lenders;

(c) Rates of environmentally-based health problems for Latino and Black residents such as lead poisoning and asthma due to living in neighborhoods with older buildings and greater proximity to pollution-causing industries, resulting in rates of chronic diseases, including asthma, which are significantly higher in communities of color throughout Lane County;

(d) Educational achievement for Latino and Black residents, who are more likely to live in areas with underperforming school systems are lagging behind in graduation rates; and

(e) Rates of infant and maternal mortality for Latino and Black mothers and children, due to living in geographical areas with less access to healthcare, and resulting in mortality rates more than twice that for White infants.

22. Black, Indigenous, and Latinx community members are more likely to be essential workers, especially in health care and agriculture, and not able to telework and safely quarantine at home they are more likely to suffer from preexisting conditions that make for particular vulnerability to COVID-19, including cardiovascular problems, lung disease, and diabetes.

23. Historic and systemic inequities in Lane County put many Latino and Black individuals at higher risk for being exposed to the novel coronavirus, more vulnerable to novel infectious diseases such as COVID-19, and more vulnerable to having a serious case of COVID-19.

24. COVID-19 cases in Oregon shows Latinos made up 32 percent of positive cases while in Lane County 25 percent and it is disproportionate. Black residents of Lane County have tested positive for COVID-19 at 2 percent.

25. People who describe themselves as Latino or Hispanic are Oregon’s the largest minority at 13.3 percent; Asian Residents at 6.2 percent; American Indian and Alaska native at 3.0 percent; and Black American residents at 2.9 percent.

26. Latino residents in Lane County is 25,656; two or more races, 14,663; some other race 9,837; Asian residents, 8,322; American Indian, 4,070; and Black or African American, 3,369.

27. Racism operates on systemic, institutional, and interpersonal levels, all of which operate throughout time and across generations.

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LANE COUNTY GOVERNMENT, CONTY SEAT of the State of Oregon, as follows:

Section 1. The Lane County Government declares racism unjust, reiterating our support for equal rights for all and affirming the county’s commitment to ending disparities based on race, ethnicity, place, or identity.

Section 2. The Lane County Government declares racism to be a public health crisis in Lane County that affects all members of our community and deserves action from all levels of government and civil society.

Section 3. Lane County Government commits to frank and open discussions of race and the impact of the decisions we make upon racial inequities in our community, by establishing an ad hoc committee made of Black Indigenous and People of Color and community allies together with elected and non-elected officials to host discussions and to learn and discover: how racism hinders social mobility and that these discussions will be integrated into our daily work together, with and by the Lane County Government, the full consideration of the Equity and Access Board, other committees as identified by County Administrator and with an inclusive and respectful approach with community partners and that we will together address issues of race and racial disparities in a full and forthright manner.

Section 4. Lane County Government calls upon all departments to establish, with urgency, the review of policies and procedures for the purposes of eradicating implicit and explicit as well as unconscious racial bias and develop instead policies and procedures that build racial equity. Measuring success by the recruitment, retention and social mobility of BiPOC within city ranks and at all levels to support the County’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) set of values.

Section 5. That the Lane County Government should in year 2021 and 2022 have a work session to discuss and agree upon how to best access all available tools as well as recommendations from the ad hoc committee to eliminate disparities based on race, place, or identity across key indicators of success, including health, education, criminal justice, the environment, employment and the economy.

Section 6. That County departments should engage, collaborate with, assist in securing space and resources as clear commitment and other enabling resources when available, and to support not-for-profit organizations that address racism, discrimination and marginalization against BiPOC and Communities of color such as NAACP, LULAC, BIG, and ACLU.

Section 7. That County departments shall collect data, disaggregated by race/ethnicity, on department staffing, procurement, contracting, and recipients of government intervention; that departments present the data to the Council and make this data publicly available via their websites, with the intention of incorporating racial equity into the analysis of governmental action and strengthening the County's commitment to analyze and address racial disparities.

Section 8. To use such data as a disparity study to enrich and gain insights on improving as community; and together with said community partners, to present a strategic plan on addressing disparities and to secure opportunities of growth and inclusion to all.

Section 9. The President of the Lane County Government Board is invited to join in this resolution by affixing her signature hereto.

Section 10. This Resolution is effective immediately upon its passage by the Lane County Government

The foregoing Resolution adopted the ____ day of _____.

County Recorder