

Introduced by the:

INGHAM COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

**RESOLUTION TO DECLARE RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS
IN THE COUNTY OF INGHAM**

RESOLUTION #20 – 254

WHEREAS, race is a social construction with no biologic basis; and

WHEREAS, racism is a social system with multiple dimensions, including individual racism, which is internalized or interpersonal; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism, which is institutional or structural, is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and depletes the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources; and

WHEREAS, racism is rooted in the foundation of America. From the time chattel slavery began in the 1600s, to the Jim Crow era, declaration of the war on drugs that eventually led to the mass incarceration of Black people, racism has remained a presence in American society while subjecting Black people to hardships and disadvantages in every aspect of life; and

WHEREAS, racism, including unconscious and conscious bias, causes persistent racial discrimination in Criminal Justice, Social Capital, Voter Suppression, Education, Transportation, Employment, Food Access, Mental Health and Health Behaviors, Socioeconomic Status, Environmental Exposure, Access to Health Services, Housing, and Public Safety; and

WHEREAS, historical racism in Michigan has impacted Black Michiganders including Black Ingham County residents. For example, discriminatory housing practices in the 20th century, known as redlining, along with the construction of I-496 expressway and discriminatory housing covenants contributed to the segregation of the Black community in the City of Lansing. Black citizens across the state of Michigan have been limited to areas with restricted access to healthy foods, disproportionate amount of convenience and liquor stores, clean water, and other essential resources, leading to a variety of other health issues, including reduced life expectancy, higher rates of infant and maternal mortality, and higher rates of lead poisoning; and

WHEREAS, for more than 400 years, racism has existed in America. However, in the 21st century, we are now seeing an increased incidence of police brutality, the result of racism and the disproportionate impact on Black people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Black people are dying in larger-than-expected, record numbers from both; and

WHEREAS, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, Black people have higher incidence of chronic illnesses than other races causing them to die from COVID-19 at 3.8 times the rate of white people. In Ingham County, Black people make up 12 percent of the population, yet they account for 28 percent of confirmed COVID-19 cases; and

WHEREAS, Black people are disproportionately suffering in-part due to long standing, unaddressed health disparities as well as systemic racism and other socioeconomic inequities. Indicators of health disparities include Black infant mortality, which is 12.9% compared to White infant mortality at 6.4%; prevalence of diabetes, which is 17.5% for Blacks compared to 7.7% for Whites; and 20% of Black residents state that they lack access to health care; and

WHEREAS, there is clear data to illustrate that racism negatively impacts the lives of Black people in Ingham County. The current COVID-19 crisis and ongoing protests against police brutality have helped to highlight now, more than ever, that racism, not race, causes disparities for Black Americans; and

WHEREAS, the privileges that other Americans experience inhibit them from fully understanding how racism impacts Black people in America - for example the performance of simple tasks like driving while Black, walking/running in neighborhoods, wearing a hoodie, going to the store, eating ice cream in your own home, or just going to a park all come with certain risk not experienced by others. Concerned parents prepare their Black youth at an early age by having “The Talk” with their children in order to attempt to protect them; and

WHEREAS, prior to the recent police brutality incidents and COVID-19 pandemic, Ingham County was already taking steps to promote health equity through the passage of its Health in All Policies resolution; and

WHEREAS, the American Public Health Association, National Association of County and City Health Officials, and the American Academy of Pediatrics have declared racism as a public health crisis, this Board believes that now is the time to do the same. The disparities caused by racism that we have outlined in this resolution represent a public health crisis which affects us all; and

WHEREAS, we as a governmental body have a responsibility to ensure an optimal quality of life for all of our Black Ingham County residents.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ingham County Board of Commissioners hereby declares racism as a public health crisis in the County of Ingham that affects all members of our society on a local (urban and rural), state, and national level and demands action from all levels of government and society.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Ingham County is recommitting its full attention to improving the quality of life and health of our Black Ingham County residents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Ingham County Board of Commissioners advocates for relevant policies that improve health in the Black community, and support local, state, and federal initiatives that advance social justice.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Ingham County will assess our current and proposed laws (ordinances and health regulations) and our policies, as well as their implementation, to promote health for Blacks within Ingham County.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Ingham County’s Health In All Policies Committee will assess internal policies and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element in all organizational practices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Ingham County Board of Commissioners shall create a broadly representative advisory board made up of Ingham County leaders, employees, and the community to achieve community-centered solutions to address the legacy of racial injustices faced by Black communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Board of Commissioners urges other governmental bodies to declare racism as a public health crisis and to immediately take steps to intentionally address and support methods that will strategically reduce the long-term impact of systemic racism.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners requests that the County Clerk forward copies of this resolution to the Governor of the State of Michigan, Ingham County's State Legislative delegation, the Michigan Association of Counties and local units of government within Ingham County.