

RESOLUTION #2020-093

BY THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LANSING

RESOLUTION TO DECLARE RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS
IN THE CITY OF LANSING

WHEREAS, race is a social construct 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 and brown 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 and brown Michiganders including Lansing 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, clean water, and other essential resources, in addition to being subjected to a disproportionate amount of convenience and liquor stores, 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, 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 longstanding, 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 Black residents compared to 7.7% for white residents; 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 and brown people in our community. 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 and brown Americans; and

WHEREAS, the privileges that other Americans experience inhibit them from fully understanding how racism impacts Black and brown 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, 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 Council 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 and brown Lansing residents.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Lansing City Council supports the Ingham County Board of Commissioners’ declaration of racism as a public health crisis in the County of Ingham.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Lansing City Council issues a call to action to address the root causes of racism that affect 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 Lansing City Council is committing its full attention to improving the quality of life and health of our Black and brown residents.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Lansing City Council will establish a standing committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to establish relevant policies that improve health in the Black and brown communities, support local, state, and federal initiatives

that advance social justice and racial equality, and continue the work which began in 2013 through the City Council's Ad-Hoc Committee on Diversity and Inclusion.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will assess our current and proposed laws (ordinances and health regulations) and our policies, as well as their implementation, to promote health for Black and brown residents of the City of Lansing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will assess internal policies and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element in all organizational practices.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in addition to being open to the public, will report back through the Committee of Whole on the status of its work on not less than a quarterly basis.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City of Lansing urges other governmental bodies to support the Ingham County's declaration 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 Lansing City Council requests that the Lansing City 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, the Michigan Municipal League, and the Capital Council of Governments.