

June 15, 2020

RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION BY THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA, TO DECLARE RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISES

WHEREAS, the Governing Authority of DeKalb County has a demonstrated track record of promoting racial equity, inclusion and diversity in all aspects of county government. This commitment is most recently exemplified in Resolution supporting the passage of Hate Crime legislation by the Georgia General Assembly; and

WHEREAS, these significant initiatives identified racism as a root cause of poverty and constricted economic mobility; and

WHEREAS, race is a social construct with no biological basis¹; and

WHEREAS, racism is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual racism that is internalized or interpersonal; systemic racism that is institutional or structural, and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks; and

WHEREAS, racism unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities, while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources², and DeKalb County's collective prosperity depends upon the equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin; and

WHEREAS, racism causes persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes in many areas of life, including housing, education, employment and criminal justice; and an emerging body of research demonstrates that racism itself is a social determinant of health³; and

WHEREAS, through the leadership of the Governing Authority, DeKalb County has committed to the elimination of racial disparities in the criminal justice system, to prioritize racial

¹ Garcia JJ, Sharif MZ. Black Lives Matter: A Commentary on Race and Racism. *AmJ Public Health.* 2015; 105: e27–e30. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2015.302706

² American Community Survey 2013 – 2017 5-Year Estimates for DeKalb County; Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Annual Survey of Jails (ASJ) and Census of Jails (COJ) 2015 Dataset; Georgia School District Report Card Website – Kirwan analysis; Jones CP. Confronting Institutionalized Racism. *Phylon.* 2002; 50(1/2):7---22; and American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>. Accessed May 2, 2020.

³ Flynn, A., Holmberg, S., Warren, D., and Wong, F. REWRITE the Racial Rules: Building an Inclusive American Economy. Roosevelt Institute, 2016.

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equity in our decision making processes, to acknowledge that communities of color have borne the burdens of inequitable social, environmental, economic, and criminal justice policies practices and investments, to understand that the legacy of these inequitable policies has caused deep disparities, harm, and mistrust, and to recognize that racial equity is realized when and only when race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes; and

WHEREAS, racism and segregation in Georgia and DeKalb County have also exacerbated a health divide resulting in African-American residents having lower life expectancies than White residents; being far more likely than other races to die prematurely; and to die of heart disease or stroke. African-American residents also have higher levels of infant mortality, lower birth weights, are more likely to be overweight or obese, have adult diabetes, and have long-term complications from diabetes; and

WHEREAS, communities of color, working class residents, and those that suffer from disabilities, are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of their social determinants of health — health inequities stemming from economic stability, education, physical environment, food and access to health care systems⁴; and

WHEREAS, a contemporary example of such disparity is highlighted by the coronavirus data in DeKalb County that African-American residents are hospitalized at a higher rate than that of other demographic groups and preliminary data in Georgia that suggest African-Americans are dying at a disproportionately higher rate from the disease^{4 5}; and

WHEREAS, more than 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes⁶; and

WHEREAS, DeKalb County acknowledges that the health impact of racism in Georgia and DeKalb County rises to the definition of a public health crisis proposed by Dr. Sandro Galea who notes: “The problem must affect large numbers of people, it must threaten health over the long-term, and it must require the adoption of large scale solutions.”¹³; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AND THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF DEKALB COUNTY, GEORGIA:

1. Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire county.
2. Work to progress as an equity and justice-oriented organization, with the Governing Authority and its staff leadership continuing to identify specific activities to further

4 Health Policy Institute of Georgia, 2017 Health Value Dashboard (Health equity profiles).

5 <https://www.policymattersGeorgia.org/research-policy/sustainable-communities/health-health-equity/building-ahealthy-Georgia> 4 Id.

6 Institute of Medicine. Unequal Treatment. <https://www.nap.edu/read/10260/chapter/2#7>. May 2, 2020. 10 American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-andissues/health-equity/racism-and-health>. Accessed May 2, 2020.

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enhance diversity and to ensure antiracism principles across the Governing Authority's leadership, staffing and contracting.

3. Promote equity through all policies approved by the Governing Authority and enhance educational efforts aimed at understanding, addressing and dismantling racism and how it affects the delivery of human and social services, economic development and public safety.
4. Continue to advocate locally and through the National Association of Counties for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and supports local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism.
5. Further work to solidify alliances and partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism and encourage other local, state, regional and national entities to recognize racism as a public health crisis.
6. Support community efforts to amplify issues of racism and engage actively and authentically with communities of color wherever they live.
7. To always promote and support policies that prioritize the health of all people, especially people of color by mitigating exposure to adverse childhood experiences.
8. Continue on-going racial equity training with the goal of reaching all Governing Authority's staff.
9. Encourage racial equity training among all community partners, grantees, vendors and contractors.
10. Identify clear goals and objectives, including periodic reports to the Governing Authority, to assess progress and capitalize on opportunities to further advance racial equity; and

Further Resolved, That the Governing Authority supports all additional efforts in DeKalb County the State of Georgia, and nationwide to address racism and public health disparities due to racial inequities; and, be it

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Further Resolved, That the DeKalb County Governing Authority call upon the Governor, the Speaker of the Georgia House, and the Georgia Senate to join with us to declare racism as a public health crisis and to enact equity in all policies of the State of Georgia.

ADOPTED by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, this ___ day of _____, 2020.

STEPHEN R. BRADSHAW

Presiding Officer
Board of Commissioners
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED by the Chief Executive Officer of DeKalb County, this ___ day of _____, 2020.

MICHAEL L. THURMOND

Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

ATTEST:

BARBARA H. SANDERS-NORWOOD, CCC

Clerk to the Board of Commissioners and
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

VIVIANE H. ERNSTES

County Attorney