

THURSTON COUNTY

Proclamation

Racism is a Public Health Crisis

WHEREAS, racism is a public health crisis affecting the residents of Thurston County; and

WHEREAS, racism and the impact on public health and medicine has a history stretching four hundred years in the United States; and

WHEREAS, throughout history, systemic racism has manifested as discrimination and oppression directed toward communities of color, resulting in trauma and harm to the health and well-being of the targets of racism, their families, their communities, and subsequent generations; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism is institutional and structural, and racism is a system that structures opportunity and assigns value based on the social interpretation of how one looks; and

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

WHEREAS, systemic racism itself is a social determinant of health; and

WHEREAS, racism is a root cause of constricted economic and social mobility; and

WHEREAS, the health impacts of racism are well documented; over 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes for communities of color; and

WHEREAS, to achieve the highest level of health and well-being for everyone we must reduce and eliminate disparities; and

WHEREAS, racism results in disparities that can be seen along a wide array of public health dimensions: physical health, mental health, child development, education, employment, public safety, environment, and housing; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners is declaring racism a crisis in Thurston County; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Health exists to protect the public's health in Thurston County.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, *the Board of Health hereby proclaims **Racism a Public Health Crisis** in Thurston County, and commits to a course of action that reduces, and ultimately eliminates health disparities so that optimal health for all is possible and race no longer predicts health outcomes; and*

The Board of Health calls on the Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department, as the local governmental public health jurisdiction, to expand collaborations and develop new partnerships focused on eliminating health disparities created by systematic exclusion from services and differential access to opportunities; and

The Board of Health calls on the Thurston County Public Health & Social Services and Thurston Thrives to improve efforts to connect and collaborate with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities for input, consultation, and direction concerning community needs; and

The Board of Health calls on Thurston Thrives, as the community's collective health impact organization, to bring together partners to implement strategies and actions that close the health equity gaps experienced by BIPOC communities in Thurston County; and

The Board of Health calls on the greater health care community, inclusive of medical, behavioral and oral health care services, to raise awareness that racism, in its systemic, cultural, and other forms, is a serious threat to public health, to the advancement of health equity and is a barrier to appropriate medical care; and

The Board of Health calls on the greater health care and social services community to continue to partner and expand efforts that advance racial equity in ways that have local and regional system impacts on the public's health and well-being; and

The Board of Health commits to supporting the Thurston County Board of County Commissioners Resolution declaring Racism a Crisis and accelerating actions that reduce and ultimately eliminate the health impacts of racism.

Adopted this Ninth day of March 2021

BOARD OF HEALTH

[Handwritten signatures of three board members]

