



Legislation Text

File #: 0095X-2020, Version: 2

To declare racism as a public health crisis in the City of Columbus and to recommit our full attention to improving the quality of life and health of our minority residents. Columbus is committed to honestly and directly addressing minority health inequities, including a systematic, data-driven focus on poverty, economic mobility, and other factors that impact the social determinants of health. Minorities are impacted more greatly by challenges and inequities in many areas, including but not limited to Crime, Social Capital, Education, Transportation, Employment, Food Access, Health Behaviors, Socioeconomic Status, Environmental Exposure, Access to Health Services, Housing, and Public Safety.

WHEREAS, racism is rooted in the foundation of America, beginning with chattel slavery in 1619; much of the Black experience in America has been endured under slavery and Jim Crow which allowed preferential opportunities for some while subjecting people of color to hardships and disadvantages in every area of life; and

WHEREAS, health disparities have existed in America for more than 400 years - we now are witnessing a coronavirus pandemic which is shining a stark light upon the long-running racial divide - Black patients are dying in larger-than-expected, record numbers, COVID-19 is killing Black people at 2.4 times the rate of white people and Black people are disproportionately suffering in-part due to long standing, unaddressed health disparities as well as systematic racism and other socioeconomic inequities; and

WHEREAS, there is clear data to illustrate that racism negatively impacts the lives of Black people in the City of Columbus - the current COVID- 19 crisis has helped to highlight now, more than ever, that racism, not race causes disproportionately higher rates of homelessness, incarceration, and economic hardships for African Americans - racism can be seen across systemic, institutional and interpersonal levels - all operating over the course of time and across generations; and

WHEREAS, the negative repercussions of historical racism, including but not limited to discriminatory lending practices of the 20th century known as “redlining” and the current limitations and access to healthy, nutritious food, reduced life expectancy, increased rates of lead poisoning, limited access to clean water, and higher rates of infant mortality demonstrate the current impact of racism; and

WHEREAS, the City of Columbus is engaging directly in a reform agenda for public safety, based on research and significant input from residents to fight racism wherever it is found within our systems, including recommendations to reform the Division of Police, especially the recommendation to form an independent civilian review board to improve accountability and transparency, building trust between residents and our Division of Police; and

WHEREAS, the City of Columbus has implemented aggressive strategies to address infant mortality in the Black Community; and Columbus Public Health has established the **CENTER FOR PUBLIC HEALTH INNOVATION Health Equity Section** under the leadership of Mayor Andrew J. Ginther with the recognition that not everyone in Columbus has the same opportunities to be healthy; there are differences in health based on race, ethnicity, sex, neighborhood, income, education, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other factors; further research has shown that the neighborhood that one lives in, ones access to quality housing, a good job, and a good education has a greater impact on ones health than does genetics or access to care; it is also understood that Black people are not thriving at the same rates as their white counterparts in these areas; and

WHEREAS, the members of Columbus City Council have steadfastly supported efforts that focus on improving the quality of life and equity for each Columbus resident - these efforts include Council's creation of the Commission on Black Girls in 2018, ongoing support for Small and Minority Businesses and the City's work to implement the recommendations of the Disparity Study, the creation of the My Brother's Keeper Program in 2015, funding and support for the Columbus Women's Commission, the Mayor's Office of Education, fair housing support, efforts to curb eviction which disproportionately impacts people of color, ongoing support for economic development and the environment, support for working families and increasing economic opportunities, supporting veterans and safe communities; and

WHEREAS, the privileges that other Americans experience inhibits them from fully understanding how racism impacts Black people in America - for example the performance of simple tasks like driving while Black, walking in neighborhoods or just going to a park come with certain risk not experienced by others - life events like getting a job, purchasing a home, buying a car, or just raising a family come with barriers that other cultures don't experience; and

WHEREAS, the members of Columbus City Council support the recent resolution drafted by the Franklin County Board of Commissioners declaring "Racism as a Public Health Crisis;" because we recognize that racism is real and as a community we have to work together to promote equity and eradicate racism - moreover this Council believes that it is now time to declare racism a public health crisis in our community; because the disparities that we have outlined represent a public health crisis which affects us all, and we as a civil society have an obligation to raise awareness and make sure that every sector of our society work to reverse this crisis; and

WHEREAS, this Council urges every sector of our society to declare these disparities as a public health crisis and to immediately take steps to address, fund, and support areas that strategically reduce the long term impact of the Social Determinants of Health for at risk communities - this includes reducing and eliminating preferential treatment for the majority while subjecting people of color to increased hardships, now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS:

That this Council does hereby declare racism as a public health crisis in the City of Columbus and recommits our full attention to improving the quality of life and health of our minority residents. Columbus is committed to honestly and directly addressing minority health inequities, including a systematic, data-driven focus on poverty, economic mobility, and other factors that impact the social determinants of health. Minorities are impacted more greatly by challenges and inequities in many areas, including but not limited to Crime, Social Capital, Education, Transportation, Employment, Food Access, Health Behaviors, Socioeconomic Status, Environmental Exposure, Access to Health Services, Housing, and Public Safety.