



Proclamation

Board of County Commissioners
Manatee County, Florida

Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Crisis

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly!" - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

WHEREAS, the Manatee County Commission has a demonstrated track record of promoting racial equity, inclusion and diversity that is exemplified in Manatee County's Fair Housing Goals, the Inclusive Manatee Initiative, and partnerships in Racially/Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (R/ECAPs); and

WHEREAS, Manatee County also has demonstrated a commitment to providing for the health and welfare of its residents by establishing a health care program for low-income and uninsured adults and a Children's Services Ordinance to improve the social welfare of County youth; and

WHEREAS, racism is a negative social system with multiple dimensions including: individual prejudices that are internalized or interpersonal; and 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 looks²; 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 resources"³, and Manatee 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, business, employment and criminal justice; and an emerging body of research demonstrates that racism itself is a social determinant of health⁴; and

WHEREAS, the US Census and the Florida Department of Health report that in Manatee County, the racial residential segregation index is 49.74%; residents of color experience dramatically higher unemployment rates (Black: 12.6%, Hispanic: 5.7%, White: 5%); face a higher poverty rate as a community (Black: 23.5%, Hispanic: 24.7%, White: 11.1%); have lower home ownership rates (Black: 40.6%, Hispanic: 47.8%, White: 74.3%); have substantially less annual median income (Black: \$39,296, Hispanic: \$41,883, White: \$57,948)⁵; and

¹ Garcia JJ, Shariz MZ. Black Lives Matter: A Commentary on Race and Racism. Am. J. Public Health 2015; e27-30.

² Jones CP. Confronting Institutional Racism. Phylon. 2002; 50 (1/2): 7-22.

³ American Public Health Association. Racism and Health. Available at: <https://www.apha.org/topics-andissues/>

⁴ Flynn, A., Holmberg, S., Warren, D., and Wong, F. REWRITE the Racial Rules: Building an Inclusive American Economy. Roosevelt Institute, 2016.

⁵ The Florida Department of Health in Manatee County. (2020) Health Equality Profile.

<http://www.flhealthcharts.com/ChartsReports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=ChartsProfiles.HealthEquityMergeMHPProfile>.

WHEREAS, institutional racism and discrimination in Florida and Manatee County have also exacerbated a health divide between White residents and residents of color; and when people are healthy, they create strong successful communities. Being healthy is about more than genetics, our health depends on the conditions of our daily life where we live, work, and play; and these conditions are not the same for everyone in Manatee County. Compared to White residents: Black residents are more likely to be overweight or obese and die of heart disease, cancer or stroke; twice as many Black residents die from diabetes; and Black and Hispanic babies are more likely to die in their first year of life. Health comes down to whether the conditions of our daily life presents us with **OPTIONS or OBSTACLES**⁵; and

WHEREAS, Black communities, working class residents, and those that suffer from disabilities are more likely to experience poor health outcomes as a consequence of the social determinants of health -- health inequities stemming from economic instability, education, physical environment, living in food and broadband deserts and inadequate access to health care systems. Safe and affordable homes are essential for well-being, but where more than 55.9% of renters in Manatee County pay more than 30% of their income in rent and face housing challenges^{5&6}. Income has a strong influence on health and longevity, and due to a history of discriminatory policies residents of color are more likely to experience economic hardships than White residents⁷; and

WHEREAS, a contemporary example of this disparity is highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the Black community. According to a recent CDC-MMWR study, Blacks are hospitalized at a much higher rate than other groups and the death rate of Blacks in that study is twice the rate of Whites⁸; and according to the Florida Department of Health, Black residents of the state are disproportionately more likely to die of COVID-19. While Black residents make up 15.5 percent of the population, they represent 19.4 percent of the Floridians who have died of the virus. This disparity is even more acute when looking at younger residents. For example, Black residents make up 18 percent of Florida's population from ages 25 to 44, while representing 44 percent of deaths in this age range⁹.

WHEREAS, more than 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes⁸; and

WHEREAS, the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners stands with the residents of Manatee County with the declaration of racism as a public health crisis and acknowledge that all lives will matter in America only when there is recognition and affirmation that "Black Lives Matter."

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AND ORDERED THAT THE MANATEE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS:

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 Board of County Commissioners and the County Administrator and its staff leadership continuing to identify specific activities to further enhance diversity and to ensure antiracism principles across county leadership, staffing and contracting.

⁶ Manatee County Government. Samoset and West Samoset Equity Profile. Inclusive Manatee Pilot Program. Summer, 2020.

⁷ CDC-Centers for Disease Control -Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report: COV^oID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups

⁸ New York Times. The Virus is Killing Young Floridians. Race is a Big Factor, August 11, 2020.

⁹ Institute of Medicine. Unequal Treatment. <https://www.nap.edu/read/10260/chapter/2#7>. May 2, 2020; and American Public Health Association. Racism and Health.

3. Promote equity through all policies approved by the County Commission 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 Black communities, 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. Promote racial equity training with the goal of reaching all county commissioners, county leadership and 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 Board of County
11. Commissioners, to assess progress and capitalize on opportunities to further advance racial equity; and,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED by the Board of County Commissioners of Manatee County, Florida, that it supports all additional efforts in Manatee County, the State of Florida and nationwide to address racism and public health disparities due to racial inequities.

ADOPTED with a quorum present and voting this 10th day of November 2020.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Betsy Benac, Chairperson

ATTEST: Angelina Colonnese
Clerk of the Circuit Court
