

RESOLUTION – RACISM IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Montgomery Township Committee, 7-02-20

WHEREAS, Racism causes persistent racial discrimination influencing 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 health; and

WHEREAS, Race is a social construct with no biological basis, but a social reality that shapes our lives; and

WHEREAS, Racism is a social system with multiple dimensions: individual racism is internalized or interpersonal; systemic racism is institutional or structural, and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on race, this unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities, while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities; and

WHEREAS, Racial residential segregation is a fundamental cause of health disparities. Many members of racial and ethnic minorities live in neighborhoods that are further from grocery stores and medical facilities, making it more difficult to receive care if sick and stock up on supplies that would allow them to stay home; and

WHEREAS, The risk of infection may be greater for workers in essential industries who continue to work outside the home despite outbreaks in their communities, including some people who may need to continue working in these jobs because of their economic circumstances. Nearly a quarter of employed Hispanic and Black workers are employed in service industry jobs compared to 16% of non-Hispanic white workers; and

WHEREAS, In all age groups, Black Americans are more likely than white Americans to report not being able to see a doctor in the past year because of cost. Stigma and systemic inequalities may undermine prevention efforts, increase levels of chronic and toxic stress, and ultimately sustain health and health care disparities; and **WHEREAS**, Data suggest Black New Jerseyans are dying at a disproportionately higher rate from COVID-19 than their counterparts of other races; and

WHEREAS, In Montgomery Township itself, Black residents are disproportionately represented among those who have tested positive for COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, Women of color account for nearly 60% of all pregnancy-related maternal deaths in New Jersey and Black women are over four times more likely to lose their lives during childbirth than their white counterparts; and

WHEREAS, Communities of color, those of low social economic status 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 systems; and

WHEREAS, The American Public Health Association (APHA) launched a National Campaign against Racism.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED That Montgomery Township will:

1. Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire community;
2. Conduct an assessment of internal policy and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element of all Montgomery Township departments;
3. Advocate for relevant policies that support local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to dismantle systemic racism;
4. Commit to review ordinances through a racial equity lens;
5. Commit to conduct human resources, vendor selection and grant management activities with a racial equity lens including reviewing internal policies and practices such as hiring, promotions, leadership appointments and funding;
6. Identify clear goals and objectives, including specific benchmarks, to assess progress and capitalize on opportunities to further advance racial equity.