

Community Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Emergency

July 16, 2020

That WHEREAS, stark and persistent health inequities exist in the United States based on race, which are caused by systemic racism; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism is a principal social determinant of individual and public health, impacting economic, employment, education, housing, justice, and health opportunities and outcomes, all of which further adversely impact the health of people of color; and

WHEREAS, the coronavirus is now exacerbating these disparities, and Black and Latino people in the U.S. have been nearly three times as likely as white people to become infected with the virus and nearly two times as likely to die, and those disparities are even more marked among younger age groups; and

WHEREAS, these same disparities exist in Vermont, and during the current pandemic, though Black residents comprise just over 1 percent of Vermont's population, they account for approximately 10 percent of the total confirmed COVID-19 cases as of July 8, 2020; and

WHEREAS, race-based disparities exist at the local level in many areas that are the most important social determinants of health; and

WHEREAS, in housing, only 4 percent of homes in Burlington are owned by people of color though people of color comprise 18 percent of Burlington's population, and potential home applicants who are Black are four-and-a-half times more likely than white applicants to be denied for a home loan (83.3 percent to 18.2 percent); and

WHEREAS, in Chittenden County, 26 percent of Black residents are in poverty compared to 10.6 percent of white residents, 8.1 percent of Black residents are unemployed compared with 4.3 percent of white residents, and 39.6 percent of Black residents have a bachelor's degree or higher compared with 49.9 percent of white residents; and

WHEREAS, to address these disparities and create true equity in Burlington and Chittenden County, individuals, organizations, and institutions will take a coordinated effort of all of those groups working with great collaboration and urgency;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we the undersigned hereby declare that racism constitutes a public health emergency in the City of Burlington and Chittenden County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we commit to the sustained and deep work of eradicating systemic racism as organizations, actively fighting racist practices and participating in the creation of more just and equitable systems; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we are announcing today immediate and specific actions for our organizations to address this emergency in the work that we do; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we commit to coordinate our work and participate in

ongoing joint action, grounded in science and data, to eliminate race-based health disparities and eradicate systemic racism.

Mayor Miro Weinberger, City of Burlington
Mark Hughes, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance
Bob Bick and Catherine Simonson, Howard Center
Jesse Bridges, United Way of Northwest Vermont
Dr. Stephen Leffler, University of Vermont Medical Center

Jacob Bogre, Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV)
Laura Zeliger, Burlington Housing Authority
Tanya Benosky, Boys and Girls Club of Burlington
Superintendent Tom Flanagan and Chair Clare Wool, Burlington School District
George Carpenter and Melissa Doyle, Burton
Kim Fitzgerald, Cathedral Square
Tyeastia Green, City of Burlington
Benjamin Ola. Akande, Champlain College
Brenda Torpy, Champlain Housing Trust
Charlie Baker, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)
Jeffrey McKee, Community Health Centers of Burlington
Sarah George, Chittenden County State's Attorney
Paul Dragon, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)
Josh Miller, The JSM Family Room
Nancy Owens, Housing Vermont
Vicky Smith, King Street Center
Tom Torti, Lake Champlain Chamber
Aly Richards, Let's Grow Kids
Karen Yacos, Local Motion
Reverend Christopher Von Cockrell, New Alpha Missionary Baptist Church and Vermont Racial Justice Alliance
Christine Hughes, New Seasons Vermont and Vermont Racial Justice Alliance
Kate Laud, Opportunities Credit Union
Christine Lloyd-Newberry, Sara Holbrook Community Center
Joey Bergstein, Seventh Generation
Mark Redmond, Spectrum Youth & Family Services
Amila Merdzanovic, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) - Vermont
Benjamin Longmore, Vermont Cannabis Partners and Vermont Racial Justice Alliance
Xusana Davis, Executive Director of Racial Equity, State of Vermont
Jane Helmstetter, Field Director for the Burlington District, Vermont Agency of Human Services
Mark Levine, MD – Commissioner, Vermont Department of Health
Maura Collins, Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA)
Mohamed Jafar, Vermont Racial Equity Association and Vermont Racial Justice Alliance
Kyle Dodson, Greater Burlington YMCA