

RESOLUTION 2020- ____

Declaration of Racism is a Public Health Crisis

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

WHEREAS, racism is a social system with multiple dimensions, including individual racism, which is internalized or interpersonal; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism, which is institutional or structural, is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and depletes the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources; and

WHEREAS, racism is rooted in the foundation of America. From the time chattel slavery began in the 1600s, to the Jim Crow era, declaration of the war on drugs that eventually led to the mass incarceration of Black people, racism has remained a presence in American society while subjecting Black people to hardships and disadvantages in every aspect of life; and

WHEREAS, racism, including implicit and conscious bias, causes persistent racial discrimination in Criminal Justice, Social Capital, Voter Suppression, Education, Transportation, Employment, Food Access, Mental Health and Health Behaviors, Socioeconomic Status, Environmental Exposure, Access to Health Services, Housing, and Public Safety; and

WHEREAS, historical racism in Michigan has impacted Black Michiganders including Black City of Jackson residents. As early as 1870, Jackson County citizens voted against a state measure giving Blacks the right to vote. More recent, discriminatory housing practices in the 20th century, known as redlining, along with the deed restrictions prohibiting Black people from living in areas like Ward 6 and, throughout the 20th century, black residents, who were once distributed throughout many parts of the city, began to be confined mostly to Ward 1; and

WHEREAS, Black citizens across the state of Michigan have been limited to areas with restricted access to healthy foods, disproportionate amount of convenience and liquor stores, clean water, and other essential resources, leading to a variety of other health issues, including reduced life expectancy, higher rates of infant and maternal mortality, and higher rates of lead poisoning; and

WHEREAS, for more than 400 years, racism has existed in America. However, in the 21st century, we are now seeing an increased incidence of police brutality, the result of racism and the disproportionate impact on Black people during the COVID-19 pandemic. Black people are dying in larger-than-expected, record numbers from both; and

WHEREAS, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19, Black people have higher incidence of chronic illnesses than other races causing them to die from COVID-19 at higher rates than white people. In Jackson

County, Black people make up 8 percent of the population, yet they account for 16 percent of confirmed COVID-19 cases; and

WHEREAS, Black people are disproportionately suffering in-part due to long standing, unaddressed health disparities as well as systemic racism and other socioeconomic inequities. Indicators of health disparities include Black infant mortality, which is 12.7% compared to White infant mortality at 5.3%; prevalence of diabetes; and many Black residents state that they lack access to health care; and

WHEREAS, more than 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes, and there is clear data to illustrate that racism negatively impacts the lives of Black people in the City of Jackson. The current COVID-19 crisis and ongoing protests against police brutality have helped to highlight now, more than ever, that racism, not race, causes disparities for Black Americans; and

WHEREAS, the privileges that other Americans experience often inhibit them from fully understanding how racism impacts Black people in America - for example the performance of simple tasks like driving while Black, walking/running in neighborhoods, wearing a hoodie, going to the store, eating ice cream in your own home, or just going to a park all come with certain risk not experienced by others. Concerned parents prepare their Black youth at an early age by having “The Talk” with their children in order to attempt to protect them; and

WHEREAS, the American Public Health Association, National Association of County and City Health Officials, and the American Academy of Pediatrics have declared racism as a public health crisis, this Council believes that now is the time to do the same. The disparities caused by racism that we have outlined in this resolution represent a public health crisis which affects us all; and

WHEREAS, we as a governmental body have a responsibility to ensure an optimal quality of life for all of our Black City of Jackson residents; now

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Jackson City Council hereby declares racism as a public health crisis in the City of Jackson that affects all members of our society on a local, state, and national level and demands action from all levels of government and society; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City of Jackson recommits its full attention to improving the quality of life and health of our Black City of Jackson residents; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Jackson City Council advocates for relevant policies that improve health in the Black community, and support local, state, and federal initiatives that advance social justice, while also encouraging individual member advocacy to dismantle systemic racism; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City of Jackson will assess our current and proposed ordinances, and internal policies and procedures, as well as their implementation, to ensure racial equity is a core element of our government, communicate the results of assessment, and determine the appropriate interval for reassessment; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the City of Jackson Human Relations Commission will engage residents, businesses and nonprofits to achieve community-centered solutions that address the legacy of racial injustices faced by Black communities, and identify specific activities to increase diversity and to

