RESOLUTION NO. 2020-174

SPONSOR Ms. Sims and Council of the Whole

DATE June 15, 2020

A Resolution declaring racism a public health crisis and establishing a Special Review Committee to determine how best to promote racial equity in the County of Summit, for the Council, and declaring an emergency.

WHEREAS, there is clear data that racism negatively impacts the lives of people of color throughout Summit County; and

WHEREAS, almost all of the 400 years of black America’s experience was under slavery and Jim Crow laws which allowed preferential opportunity to some while at the same time subjected people of color to hardship and disadvantage in all areas of life; and

WHEREAS, still now, racism – not race – causes disproportionately high rates of homelessness, incarceration, poor education and health outcomes and economic hardship for African Americans; and

WHEREAS, racism acts on systemic, institutional and interpersonal levels, all of which operate throughout time and across generations; 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, and Summit County’s collective prosperity depends upon the equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin; and

WHEREAS, this Council believes that the time is now to declare racism a public health crisis in our community; and

WHEREAS, the World Health Organization defines “public health” as “the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life and promoting health through the organized efforts of society” and those efforts “aim to provide conditions under which people can... be healthy, improve their health and well-being, or prevent the deterioration of their health”; and

WHEREAS, the United States Office of Disease Prevention recognizes that discrimination negatively impacts health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the Social Determinants of Health – the social and material factors that influence health outcomes - impact life-long outcomes beginning even before birth; and

WHEREAS, the Boston Public Health Commission states that racism impacts Social Determinants of Health, including Social Capital, Education, Transportation, Employment, Food Access, Health Behaviors, Socioeconomic Status, Environmental Exposure, Access to Health Services, Housing, and Public Safety; and

WHEREAS, the negative repercussions of historical racism, including but not limited to discriminatory lending practices of the 20th century known as “redlining,” impact current
outcomes regarding access to nutritious food, economic security, educational achievement, rates of lead poisoning, and infant mortality; and

WHEREAS, research indicates that adverse childhood experiences are disproportionately experienced by black children when compared to white children thus having negative impacts on academic, behavioral, and physical health outcomes of black children; and

WHEREAS, statistics show a national disparity between black and white infant mortality rates and the State of Ohio consistently ranks among the worst states concerning black infant mortality rates; moreover, in Summit County, black infants are two times more likely to die before their first birthday compared to white infants. These infants are also three times more likely to die from complications of having a low birth weight compared to white babies. Lastly, Black mothers are twice as likely to receive prenatal care too late (by their third trimester) or not at all, when compared to white mothers; and

WHEREAS, on any given day, 70 to 80 percent of the kids in Summit County juvenile detention are black/minority and black/minority youths are 60 percent more likely to be detained than white youths; and

WHEREAS, the rate of poverty in the Summit County for black residents is more than three times that of white residents, and the median income for white residents is over twice that of black residents; and

WHEREAS, the rates of chronic diseases such as: asthma, diabetes, and hypertension and mental health issues, including depression are twice as high in black residents of Summit County; and

WHEREAS, the life expectancy of black residents of Summit County is nearly 6 years less than that of their white neighbors; and

WHEREAS, this Council recognizes that racism is a public health crisis that affects all members of our society both on a local level and nationwide and deserves action from all levels of government and civil society; and

WHEREAS, this Council supports the establishment of a Special Review Committee to determine how best to address these issues and to: seek solutions to reshape the discourse and actively engage all citizens in racial justice work; continue to work to build alliances with organizations that are confronting racism and encourage partners to recognize racism as a public health crisis; continue to promote racially equitable economic and workforce development in Summit County; continue to promote racially equitable hiring and promotion of all employees including County employees; and advocate and draft relevant policies that prioritize the health of people of color and mitigate exposure to adverse childhood experiences and trauma in childhood; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the County of Summit, State of Ohio, that:
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SECTION 1

That this Council declares racism to be a public health crisis and will establish a Special Review Committee to determine and make recommendations on the best action steps this Council can take in promoting racial equity in the County of Summit.

SECTION 2

That this Special Review Committee shall be chaired by Councilwoman Veronica Sims and shall report its findings and recommendations to Council and the Executive no later than December 31, 2020 so that this Council can take meaningful action steps towards enacting real change and promoting racial equity in the County of Summit.

SECTION 3

That the Clerk of Council is directed to transmit copies of this resolution to the NAACP Akron Branch, the Akron Urban League, Summit County Public Health, Community Action Akron Summit, City of Akron Office of Health Equity, United Way of Summit County and the Greater Akron Chamber of Commerce.

SECTION 4

This Resolution is hereby declared an emergency in the interest of the health, safety and welfare of the residents and employees of the County of Summit and for the further purpose of immediately declaring racism as a public health crisis and establishing a Special Review Committee to determine how best to promote racial equity in the County of Summit.

SECTION 5

Provided this Resolution receives the affirmative vote of eight (8) members, it shall take effect immediately upon its adoption and approval by the Executive; otherwise it shall take effect and be in force at the earliest time provided by law.

SECTION 6

It is found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating to the adoption of this Resolution were adopted in an open meeting of this Council, and that all deliberations of this Council and of any of its committees that resulted in such formal action, were in meetings open to the public, in compliance with all legal requirements, including Section 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.
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INTRODUCED June 1, 2020

ADOPTED June 15, 2020

CLERK OF COUNCIL

APPROVED June 16, 2020

EXECUTIVE

ENACTED EFFECTIVE June 16, 2020

Voice Vote YES: 11-0 Dickinson, Donofrio, Feeman, Koehler, McKenney, Prentice, Rodgers, Schmidt, Sims, Walters, Wilhite