

1 RESOLUTION NO. 2020-174

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3 SPONSOR Ms. Sims and Council of the Whole

4  
5 DATE June 15, 2020 COMMITTEE Committee of the Whole

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

10  
11 WHEREAS, there is clear data that racism negatively impacts the lives of people of color  
12 throughout Summit County; and

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

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

21  
22 WHEREAS, racism acts on systemic, institutional and interpersonal levels, all of which  
23 operate throughout time and across generations; and

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25 WHEREAS, racism unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities, while  
26 unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the  
27 whole society through the waste of human resources, and Summit County's collective prosperity  
28 depends upon the equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of  
29 their skin; and

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

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

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

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

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

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50 WHEREAS, the negative repercussions of historical racism, including but not limited to  
51 discriminatory lending practices of the 20th century known as "redlining," impact current  
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4 outcomes regarding access to nutritious food, economic security, educational achievement, rates  
5 of lead poisoning, and infant mortality; and  
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7 WHEREAS, research indicates that adverse childhood experiences are disproportionately  
8 experienced by black children when compared to white children thus having negative impacts on  
9 academic, behavioral, and physical health outcomes of black children; and  
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11 WHEREAS, statistics show a national disparity between black and white infant mortality  
12 rates and the State of Ohio consistently ranks among the worst states concerning black infant  
13 mortality rates; moreover, in Summit County, black infants are two times more likely to die  
14 before their first birthday compared to white infants. These infants are also three times more  
15 likely to die from complications of having a low birth weight compared to white babies. Lastly,  
16 Black mothers are twice as likely to receive prenatal care too late (by their third trimester) or not  
17 at all, when compared to white mothers; and  
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19 WHEREAS, on any given day, 70 to 80 percent of the kids in Summit County juvenile  
20 detention are black/minority and black/minority youths are 60 percent more likely to be detained  
21 than white youths; and  
22

23 WHEREAS, the rate of poverty in the Summit County for black residents is more than  
24 three times that of white residents, and the median income for white residents is over twice that  
25 of black residents; and  
26

27 WHEREAS, the rates of chronic diseases such as: asthma, diabetes, and hypertension and  
28 mental health issues, including depression are twice as high in black residents of Summit  
29 County; and  
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31 WHEREAS, the life expectancy of black residents of Summit County is nearly 6 years  
32 less than that of their white neighbors; and  
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34 WHEREAS, this Council recognizes that racism is a public health crisis that affects all  
35 members of our society both on a local level and nationwide and deserves action from all levels  
36 of government and civil society; and  
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38 WHEREAS, this Council supports the establishment of a Special Review Committee to  
39 determine how best to address these issues and to: seek solutions to reshape the discourse and  
40 actively engage all citizens in racial justice work; continue to work to build alliances with  
41 organizations that are confronting racism and encourage partners to recognize racism as a public  
42 health crisis; continue to promote racially equitable economic and workforce development in  
43 Summit County; continue to promote racially equitable hiring and promotion of all employees  
44 including County employees; and advocate and draft relevant policies that prioritize the health of  
45 people of color and mitigate exposure to adverse childhood experiences and trauma in childhood;  
46 and  
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48 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the County of Summit, State  
49 of Ohio, that:  
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3  
4 SECTION 1

5  
6 That this Council declares racism to be a public health crisis and will establish a Special  
7 Review Committee to determine and make recommendations on the best action steps this  
8 Council can take in promoting racial equity in the County of Summit.

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10 SECTION 2

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

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17 SECTION 3

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

23  
24 SECTION 4

25  
26 This Resolution is hereby declared an emergency in the interest of the health, safety and  
27 welfare of the residents and employees of the County of Summit and for the further purpose of  
28 immediately declaring racism as a public health crisis and establishing a Special Review  
29 Committee to determine how best to promote racial equity in the County of Summit.

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31 SECTION 5

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

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37 SECTION 6

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39 It is found and determined that all formal actions of this Council concerning and relating  
40 to the adoption of this Resolution were adopted in an open meeting of this Council, and that all  
41 deliberations of this Council and of any of its committees that resulted in such formal action,  
42 were in meetings open to the public, in compliance with all legal requirements, including Section  
43 121.22 of the Ohio Revised Code.  
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INTRODUCED June 1, 2020

ADOPTED June 15, 2020

  
CLERK OF COUNCIL

  
PRESIDENT 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