



**HEALTHWEST BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
RESOLUTION #92  
RESOLUTION TO DECLARE RACISM AND SOCIAL INEQUITIES AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

At a regular meeting of the HealthWest Board of Directors, held via Zoom on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2020 at 8:00 a.m. local time, the following resolution was adopted:

**WHEREAS**, race is a social construction with no biologic basis; and

**WHEREAS**, racism and social inequities is a social system with multiple dimensions: that is internalized or interpersonal; systemic inequities that is institutional or structural, and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks or social status; and

**WHEREAS**, racism and social inequities unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources, and Muskegon County's collective prosperity depends upon the equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin or social status; and

**WHEREAS**, racism and social inequities causes persistent discrimination and disparate outcomes in many areas of life, including housing, education, employment and criminal justice; and emerging body of research demonstrates that racism itself is a social determinant of health; and

**WHEREAS**, environmental injustice leads to the inequitable and disproportionate heavy exposure of poor, minority, and disenfranchised populations to toxic chemicals, contaminated air and water, unsafe workplaces, and other environmental hazards contributing to disparities in health status across populations of differing ethnicity, race, and socioeconomic status; and

**WHEREAS**, more than 100 studies have linked racism and social inequities to poor health outcomes; as evidenced by the over representation of persons of color and the disabled population in the COVID-19 positive population in Muskegon County; and

**WHEREAS**, according to data from the National Institutes for Health, racial and ethnic minorities in the United States are more likely than whites to delay or fail to seek mental health treatment and multiple estimates show that each year, there are between 75,000 and 100,000 excess premature deaths for U.S. blacks compared with whites ; and

**WHEREAS**, there is clear data to illustrate that racism negatively impacts the lives of the people of Muskegon County. The COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing protests against police brutality have helped to

highlight now, more than ever, that racism, not race, causes disparities for Black and other Americans; and

**WHEREAS**, we as a community mental health services program have a responsibility to ensure equitable livability and mental health services and supports for all of our Muskegon County residents and while it is important to point out the wrongdoing towards Black Americans, systematic racism hurts all of us and individualized strategies are needed to address health disparities across all marginalized populations;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the HealthWest Board of Directors hereby declares racism and social inequities as a public health crisis that affects all members of our society.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that HealthWest is recommitting its full attention to improving the quality of life and health of our Black residents and will immediately take steps to address and support methods that will strategically reduce the long-term impact of systemic racism.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that HealthWest will conduct a full assessment of all internal policy and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element and will amend policies if needed.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that HealthWest will appoint a staff person to the role of Diversity Advisor to the Executive Director to ensure the execution of the plan outlined by the TIDE (Team for Inclusion, Diversity and Equity) Committee and fulfilling our mission and best supporting our staff and individuals in services.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that HealthWest will continue hosting community trainings and events addressing behavioral health issues for diverse groups, including the LGBTQ, military veteran, religious, and minority communities as well as actively support and participate in the Community Gathering Initiative, which facilitates regular dialogue about race and racism in Muskegon County.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that HealthWest will work to build alliances and partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism and encourages other local, state, and national entities to recognize racism and social inequities as a public health crisis.



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Janet S. Thomas, Chair  
HealthWest Board of Directors