

RESOLUTION NO. 30407

A RESOLUTION DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC
HEALTH CRISIS IN THE CITY OF CHATTANOOGA.

WHEREAS, the foundation of America is rooted in racism. The Black experience in America was one of chattel slavery and Jim Crow Black labor formed the economic base for American life yet Black America is still subject to hardships and disadvantages in every area of life; and

WHEREAS, health disparities have existed in America since the birth of our nation. We now are witnessing a pandemic where Black patients are dying at 2.4 times the rate of White people. Black citizens are suffering in-part due to long standing, unaddressed health disparities such as a lack of accessibility to quality health care; and

WHEREAS, current events of 2020 illustrate racism negatively impacts the lives of Black people; COVID-19, police brutality, and the Black Lives Matter movement have helped to highlight how racism, not race, causes disproportionately higher rates of homelessness, incarceration, and economic hardships for African Americans. Racism can be seen across both institutional and interpersonal levels - operating over the course of time and across generations; and

WHEREAS, the repercussions of historical racism cover every aspect of life, including, but not limited to, discriminatory lending practices of the 20th Century known as “redlining” inhibited the accumulation of familial wealth, limited access to quality food, reduced life expectancy, increased rates of lead poisoning, limited access to clean water, higher rates of infant

mortality, and bias in the medical professions towards black women demonstrate the current impact of racism; and

WHEREAS, endemic racial bias within public institutions has been and continues to affect Black Americans. This shows up in all aspects of social society where Black children are viewed as older than their White counterparts, receive harsher punishments in both the education and juvenile justice systems than their White counterparts, they are more often subject to punitive methods versus therapeutic methods than their White counterparts regarding alleged behavioral issues. This treatment follows Black Americans into adulthood through the court system via cash bail, longer jail sentences, inadequate venues for voting, purging of voter rolls affecting Black Americans in greater numbers than their White counterparts.

THEREFORE, the City of Chattanooga is engaging directly in a reform agenda for public safety based on research and significant input from residents to fight racism wherever it is found within our systems. This includes recommendations on reforming the Police Department, the recommendation to push subpoena power for citizen oversight board to improve accountability and transparency, in order to build trust between residents and our Police Department; and

THEREFORE, the City of Chattanooga also has recently proposed strategies to address racial inequities in the Black Community by forming the Mayor's Office of Community Resilience. Office of Community Resilience is forming with the intent on recognizing that not everyone in Chattanooga has the same opportunities to be healthy; recognizing the differences in economics, housing, and health based upon race, ethnicity, sex, neighborhood, income, education, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other factors; recognizing national research which demonstrates that the neighborhood one lives in directly impacts ones access to quality housing, a good job, and a good education. Healthy neighbors have a greater impact on one's health than

genetics or access to care. The Office of Community Resilience also recognizes that Black people are not thriving at the same rates as their White counterparts in these areas; and

THEREFORE, the City of Chattanooga recognizes the privileges other Americans experience which inhibits them from fully understanding how racism impacts Black people in America. Chattanooga recognizes Black citizens experience certain risks with the performance of simple tasks such as driving, walking or jogging in neighborhoods. Chattanooga recognizes life events such as getting a job, purchasing a home, buying a car, or raising a family which comes with barriers other cultures do not experience; and

THEREFORE, the members of the Chattanooga City Council recognize racism is real. As a community, we must work together to promote equity and eradicate racism. Moreover this Council believes NOW is the time to declare racism a public health crisis. The aforementioned disparities represent a public health crisis which affects us all, and we as a civil society have an obligation to raise awareness and make sure every sector of our society works to reverse this crisis; and

FURTHER, the members of the Chattanooga City Council urge our community to immediately take steps to address, fund, and support areas to strategically reduce the long-term impact of the social determinants of health by reducing and eliminating preferential treatment for the majority while subjecting Black, Brown, and poor White people to increased hardships,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHATTANOOGA, That this City Council does hereby declare racism as a public health crisis in the City of Chattanooga and recommits our full attention to improving the quality of life and health of our minority residents. The City of Chattanooga is committed to honestly and directly addressing minority health inequities, including a systematic, data-driven focus on poverty,

economic mobility, and inequities other factors that may impact the social determinants of health. Minorities are impacted more greatly by challenges and inequities in many areas, including but not limited to, Crime, Social Capital, Education, Transportation, Employment, Food Access, Health Behaviors, Socioeconomic Status, Environmental Exposure, Access to Health Services, Housing, and Public Safety.

ADOPTED: July 7, 2020

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