

## **Community Declaration of Racism as a Public Health Emergency**

July 16, 2020

That WHEREAS, stark and persistent health inequities exist in the United States based on race, which are caused by systemic racism; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism is a principal social determinant of individual and public health, impacting economic, employment, education, housing, justice, and health opportunities and outcomes, all of which further adversely impact the health of people of color; and

WHEREAS, the coronavirus is now exacerbating these disparities, and Black and Latino people in the U.S. have been nearly three times as likely as white people to become infected with the virus and nearly two times as likely to die,<sup>i</sup> and those disparities are even more marked among younger age groups;<sup>ii</sup> and

WHEREAS, these same disparities exist in Vermont, and during the current pandemic, though Black residents comprise just over 1 percent of Vermont's population, they account for approximately 10 percent of the total confirmed COVID-19 cases as of July 8, 2020<sup>iii</sup>; and

WHEREAS, race-based disparities exist at the local level in many areas that are the most important social determinants of health; and

WHEREAS, in housing, only 4 percent of homes in Burlington are owned by people of color though people of color comprise 18 percent of Burlington's population,<sup>iv</sup> and potential home applicants who are Black are four-and-a-half times more likely than white applicants to be denied for a home loan (83.3 percent to 18.2 percent);<sup>v</sup> and

WHEREAS, in Chittenden County, 26 percent of Black residents are in poverty compared to 10.6 percent of white residents, 8.1 percent of Black residents are unemployed compared with 4.3 percent of white residents, and 39.6 percent of Black residents have a bachelor's degree or higher compared with 49.9 percent of white residents;<sup>vi</sup> and

WHEREAS, to address these disparities and create true equity in Burlington and Chittenden County, individuals, organizations, and institutions will take a coordinated effort of all of those groups working with great collaboration and urgency;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we the undersigned hereby declare that racism constitutes a public health emergency in the City of Burlington and Chittenden County; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we commit to the sustained and deep work of eradicating systemic racism as organizations, actively fighting racist practices and participating in the creation of more just and equitable systems; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we are announcing today immediate and specific actions for our organizations to address this emergency in the work that we do; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we commit to coordinate our work and participate in ongoing joint action, grounded in science and data, to eliminate race-based health disparities and eradicate systemic racism.

Mayor Miro Weinberger, City of Burlington  
Mark Hughes, Vermont Racial Justice Alliance  
Bob Bick and Catherine Simonson, Howard Center  
Jesse Bridges, United Way of Northwest Vermont  
Dr. Stephen Leffler, University of Vermont Medical Center

Jacob Bogre, Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV)  
Laura Zeliger, Burlington Housing Authority  
Tanya Benosky, Boys and Girls Club of Burlington  
Superintendent Tom Flanagan and Chair Clare Wool, Burlington School District  
George Carpenter and Melissa Doyle, Burton  
Kim Fitzgerald, Cathedral Square  
Tyeastia Green, City of Burlington  
Benjamin Ola. Akande, Champlain College  
Brenda Torpy, Champlain Housing Trust  
Charlie Baker, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC)  
Jeffrey McKee, Community Health Centers of Burlington  
Sarah George, Chittenden County State's Attorney  
Paul Dragon, Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity (CVOEO)  
Josh Miller, The JSM Family Room  
Nancy Owens, Housing Vermont  
Vicky Smith, King Street Center  
Tom Torti, Lake Champlain Chamber  
Aly Richards, Let's Grow Kids  
Karen Yacos, Local Motion  
Reverend Christopher Von Cockrell, New Alpha Missionary Baptist Church and Vermont Racial Justice Alliance  
Christine Hughes, New Seasons Vermont and Vermont Racial Justice Alliance  
Kate Laud, Opportunities Credit Union  
Christine Lloyd-Newberry, Sara Holbrook Community Center  
Joey Bergstein, Seventh Generation  
Mark Redmond, Spectrum Youth & Family Services  
Amila Merdzanovic, U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) - Vermont  
Benjamin Longmore, Vermont Cannabis Partners and Vermont Racial Justice Alliance  
Xusana Davis, Executive Director of Racial Equity, State of Vermont  
Jane Helmstetter, Field Director for the Burlington District, Vermont Agency of Human Services  
Mark Levine, MD – Commissioner, Vermont Department of Health  
Maura Collins, Vermont Housing Finance Agency (VHFA)

Mohamed Jafar, Vermont Racial Equity Association and Vermont Racial Justice Alliance  
Kyle Dodson, Greater Burlington YMCA

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- <sup>i</sup> [“The Fullest Look Yet at the Racial Inequity of Coronavirus,”](#) *New York Times*, July 5, 2020
- <sup>ii</sup> [“Race gaps in COVID-19 deaths are even bigger than they appear,”](#) *Brookings*, June 16, 2020
- <sup>iii</sup> [“Weekly Summary of Vermont COVID-19 Data,”](#) *Vermont Department of Health*, July 10, 2020
- <sup>iv</sup> 2017 HUD Burlington Assessment for Fair Housing, via [“2019 Equity Report,”](#) City of Burlington, March 2020
- <sup>v</sup> [“MSA/MD Aggregate Reports,”](#) FFIEC Home Mortgage Disclosure Act, August 7, 2019
- <sup>vi</sup> U.S. Census Bureau 2012-2016 via [“Community Health Needs Assessment: Chittenden and Grand Isle Counties,”](#) University of Vermont Medical Center, 2019.