

## OLMSTED COUNTY, MINNESOTA

### Request For County Board Action

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**AGENDA DATE:** August 4, 2020

**REQUEST BY:** Lisa Morris-Helmstetler, Administration

**STATE ITEM OF BUSINESS:** Direct the PHAB and HRC to Conduct a Joint Study of Race and Racism as a Public Health Issue

**BACKGROUND:**

**COUNTY BOARD ACTION REQUESTED:**

Direct the Public Health Advisory Board and the Human Rights Commission to study and investigate racism and disparities in healthcare, report back to the Olmsted County Board of Commissioners with findings, and adopt supporting resolution as follows.

Reviewed with additional material provided: ✓ Approved  
County Administrator

## Resolution No. 20-153

WHEREAS, racial and ethnic minorities in the United States are less likely to receive preventative medical care [The Commonwealth Fund (2018), Retrieved from <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/newsletter-article/2018/sep/focus-reducing-racial-disparities-health-care-confronting>]; and

WHEREAS, the **COVID-19** pandemic has revealed widespread and fundamental disparities across the United States for both exposure and severe outcomes related to this virus associated with race; and

WHEREAS, the disparities recognized nationally are also evident in Olmsted County related to COVID-19 to the extent that residents that identify as black are more than five times more likely to acquire infection than those that identify as white In addition, those that identify as Hispanic have more than four times the risk for exposure compared to those that identify as white; and

WHEREAS, beyond COVID-19, significant disparities in health when considering race are and have been evident in Olmsted County based on the county's community health needs assessments; and,

WHEREAS, Olmsted County's most recent community assessment reported that while 31.3% of residents that identify as white report financial stress while 53.9% of non-white residents are financially stressed; and,

WHEREAS, Olmsted County's most recent community assessment identified "community inclusiveness" as the fifth most important health issue in our community; and

WHEREAS, public health can be defined as the science, practice, and art of collective efforts to prevent disease, promote health, and prolong quality of life among populations, while assuring conditions in which all people can be healthy [Washington University of St. Louis, Institute of Public Health (2020), Retrieved from <https://publichealth.wustl.edu/public-health-and-global-health-definitions/>; and

WHEREAS, "Public health professionals try to prevent problems from happening or recurring through implementing educational programs, recommending policies, administering services and conducting research," highlighting that "a large part of public health is promoting healthcare equity, quality and accessibility" [CDC Foundation (2020), Retrieved from <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/what-public-health>]; and

WHEREAS, the American Public Health Association (APHA) states that "Racism is an ongoing public health crisis that needs our attention now" [American Public Health Association (2020), Retrieved from <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>]; and

WHEREAS, more than 100 studies have linked systemic racism to worse health outcomes [Institute of Medicine (2003), Retrieved from <https://www.nap.edu/read/10260/chapter/11>]; and

WHEREAS, as of August 1st, 2020 more than 80 state and local government agencies have now passed resolutions that declare racial disparities and racism as a public health crisis.

Resolution 20-153

Meeting of August 4, 2020

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Olmsted County Board of Commissioners recognizes that Inequity Associated with Race and Racism is a Public Health Issue and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Olmsted County Board of Commissioners directs the Olmsted County Public Health Services Advisory Board and the Olmsted County Human Rights Commission to jointly study and investigate this issue with special emphasis on the services the County provides and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOVLED, that findings and any recommendations from this joint study will be presented to the County Board of Commissioners once complete.

Dated at Rochester, Minnesota this 4<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2020.

OLMSTED COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

DocuSigned by:  
*Matt Flynn* 8/4/2020 | 9:24 PM CDT  
141C092CF65344C  
Matt Flynn, Chairperson

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:  
*Lisa Morris-Helmstetler* 8/5/2020 | 6:00 AM CDT  
F2D519A6CDB1430...  
Lisa Morris-Helmstetler, Deputy Clerk to the County Board

**RESULT:** ADOPTED [UNANIMOUS]  
**AYES:** Podulke, Brown, Flynn, Bier, Kiscaden, Thein, Wright