



**JOINT DECLARATION  
OF THE  
FREDERICK COUNTY EXECUTIVE, COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBER DISTRICT 3,  
AND  
COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER  
OF  
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND**

**A DECLARATION** concerning Racism as a Public Health Crisis.

**BACKGROUND**

Race is a social construct with no biological basis that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, and the social, economic, and political aims of a society at a given period. Racism is a multiple dimensional issue that includes individual racism that may be internalized or interpersonal; systemic racism that is institutional or structural; and a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the personal interpretation of how one looks.

Specific individuals and communities are unfairly disadvantaged by racism while unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities and undermines society as a whole by weakening the health and economy in Frederick County and elsewhere. The experience of racism, both daily life and historical and generational trauma, produces its own form of chronic stress, resulting in harmful social and biological effects which impact many areas of life, including housing, education, employment, and criminal justice.

An emerging body of research demonstrates that racism is a social determinant of health. More than 100 studies have linked racism to worse health outcomes. The American Public Health Association (APHA) launched a National Campaign Against Racism. Health inequities are reflected in differences in length of life, quality of life, rates of disease, disability and death, severity of disease, and access to treatment. The American Public Health Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics have found racism to be a barrier to health equity and have named racism a driving force of how these social determinants of health are distributed. The social determinants of health have been defined by Healthy People 2020 as the social and material factors that influence health, including employment, housing, education, health care, public safety, and food access. These determinants are known to impact life-long health outcomes in individuals beginning even before birth.

Frederick County Community Health Assessment data shows that there are racial or ethnic disparities in our community for every health indicator with sufficient data available. Racial and ethnic disparities are documented in Frederick County for adolescent alcohol and tobacco use,

cancers, emergency department visits for dental care, HIV, maternal and child health issues such as C-section births, early prenatal care, infant mortality, low birth weight, preterm birth and teen birth, and sexually transmitted infections such as chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis. The non-partisan National Partnership for Women and Families has found that in the United States, health and racism are inextricably linked, creating a harmful impact on individuals and communities of color, including unequal access to quality education, employment, livable wages, healthy food, stable and affordable housing, and safe and sustainable communities.

The 2018 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results for Frederick County High School students reported that:

- Black students were least likely to receive preventative health care;
- Students of Color were least likely to eat breakfast once in a span of seven days;
- Students of Color were least likely to eat breakfast seven days in a row;
- Black students were more than two times more likely to experience food frequently not lasting and having no money to get more;
- Black students were least likely to have eaten vegetables recently or on a daily basis;
- Black and Hispanic/Latino students were most likely to be diagnosed with asthma by a medical professional; and
- Black students were twice as likely to have member(s) of their household go to jail or prison.

Health equity is achieved when every person has the opportunity to attain his or her full potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential because of social position or other socially determined circumstances. Local government's responsibilities to address racism include reshaping our discourse and agenda so that we all actively engage in racial justice work. Frederick County must address persistent disparities in health outcomes, and the social, economic, educational and environmental inequities that contribute to them. The County's collective prosperity depends upon equitable access to opportunity for every resident regardless of the color of their skin.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT DECLARED** by the County Executive, County Council District 3 Member, and the County Health Officer of Frederick County, that Racism and its intergenerational effects are a public health crisis in Frederick County, and the following statements are supported for policies that produce equitable outcomes and inform our public discourse on racism within the County:

1. Racism is a public health crisis in Frederick County that affects all members of our community.
2. It is incumbent upon the County to continue creating internal policies and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element of Frederick County, and in collaboration with other community partners, to be transparent and inclusive in conducting assessments and communicating results with the community.


3. It will be the policy of Frederick County to continue identifying specific objectives to incorporate antiracism principles across county agencies, and increase diversity in leadership, staffing and procurement to produce a county government that represents the community it serves.
4. It will be the policy of Frederick County to incorporate into organizational work efforts to address and dismantle racism, promote a more in-depth understanding of racism, and how racism affects individual and population health, and provide tools to assist members of the Frederick County community to engage actively and authentically with communities of color.
5. The County will advocate for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color and will support local, state, and federal initiatives that advance social justice, while also encouraging individual advocacy to dismantle systemic racism.
6. The County will expand its efforts to build alliances and partnerships with other governmental agencies and organizations that are confronting racism, and will encourage other local, state and national entities to recognize racism as a public health threat.

The undersigned hereby certifies that this Declaration was approved and adopted on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of March, 2021.

COUNTY EXECUTIVE OF  
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

By:   
Jan H. Gardner, County Executive

DISTRICT 3 COUNTY COUNCIL MEMBER  
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

By:   
M. C. Keegan-Ayer, Council Member

COUNTY HEALTH OFFICER  
FREDERICK COUNTY, MARYLAND

By:   
Barbara A. Brookmyer, MD MPH