

**For Immediate Release**

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**Washtenaw County Board of Health Names Racism as a Public Health Crisis**  
*Resolution confirms collective commitment to health equity*

YPSILANTI, Mich., July 1, 2020 – The Washtenaw County Board of Health passed a resolution June 30, 2020 explicitly declaring racism as a public health crisis and confirming our collective commitment to health equity in Washtenaw County.

“We know that racism has helped drive unequal economic, cultural, and medical circumstances that each, and in concert, lead to poorer health outcomes for people of color throughout America,” says James J. Carty, Chair of the Board of Health. “The only way to change this is to acknowledge it and center it as we try to learn from the mistakes of our past and build a better community where all residents of Washtenaw County are served fairly and equally.”

The Board of Health met virtually on Friday, June 26 for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic began and agreed to take immediate action through a resolution. The resolution was finalized yesterday. It confirms that racism is a public health crisis that “harms, kills and prevents individuals and communities from living healthy lives,” and makes real commitments that include sharing power, decision-making and resources with community members and communities of color who are most impacted by existing health disparities.

The Board of Health resolved to support the dedication of Health Department resources to deepen its work in solidarity with social movements for racial justice – and to work in partnership with community members, organizations and leaders who are engaged in anti-racist action, addressing community-defined problems and using community-driven solutions to commit to real transformation. All of this accords with the Department’s [vision and guiding principles for health equity](#) as well as Washtenaw County’s [Health Equity Ordinance](#).

An annual review and assessment of progress towards strategic goals, internal policies, procedures, practices, and budget allocations for their impact on racial equity, diversity and inclusion is also a part of the Board of Health’s commitment.

Read the [full resolution](#) naming racism as a public health crisis.

The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners is also expected to take action on racism as a public health crisis when they convene this week.

“This declaration and commitment to health equity – as well as the expected action from the Board of Commissioners are critical to our ability to move forward together,” says Felicia Brabec, PsyD, MSW, who sits on both the Board of Commissioners and the Board of Health for Washtenaw County. “Naming racism and truly working together are vital steps, but we must commit to doing more. We must show our commitment at every level, put resources behind our intentions and work collectively to see meaningful and lasting change.”

**Washtenaw County Health Department**

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs. Visit us at [washtenaw.org/health](https://www.washtenaw.org/health) or call 734-544-6700.

For local information on COVID-19, see [www.washtenaw.org/covid19](https://www.washtenaw.org/covid19).

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