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Racism as Public Health Crisis

WHEREAS, prominent institutions such as the American Public Health Association, the American Medical Association, the American Association of Pediatrics, the National Partnership for Women and Families, and the American College of Emergency Physicians have each recognized racism as an urgent threat to public health in the United States; and

WHEREAS, while there is no epidemiologic definition of "crisis," the health impact of racism as documented across the United States clearly rises to the definition of crisis having significant impacts on individuals and communities of color and their social determinants of health; and

WHEREAS, racism not only unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities by unfairly giving advantages to other individuals and communities, but it also serves to diminish the strength of society as a whole through the waste of human resources; and

WHEREAS, as stewards of civil society, elected officials have an obligation to raise awareness about the health impact of racism and encourage every sector of our society work to reverse this crisis; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wheeling has in modern times enacted civil rights protections to outlaw discrimination in employment and housing on the basis of race, color, national origin, and ancestry, as well as religion, sex, age, blindness, disability, familial status, sexual orientation, and gender identity, and veteran status; and

WHEREAS, by resolution in June, 2019, Wheeling City Council acknowledged that these civil rights protections and other efforts have not fully eradicated the effects of institutional racism from our community and that efforts to strive for equality and equity and opportunity in all areas of life for African Americans in Wheeling must persist; and

WHEREAS, members of Wheeling City Council to a person support proactive and meaningful efforts by our municipal government that focus on improving the quality of life and equity for each Wheeling resident by seeking to reverse the health and other impacts of racism wherever they may occur.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Mayor and Councilmembers of Wheeling, West Virginia, in City Council assembled, that the City Manager be hereby directed take the following steps:

1. Work with City staff to review all City policies and procedures for the purposes of eradicating any implicit and explicit racial bias, and promote such policies and procedures that advance racial equity;

2. Require all classified and unclassified municipal employees to complete implicit bias training;

3. Require all new municipal employees to have implicit bias training as part of the new-hire process;

4. Work towards building a more diverse and inclusive workforce in which employees reflect the diversity of the community at all levels and where differences are welcomed and valued;

5. Incorporate inclusion and equity, and offer educational training to expand employees' understanding of how racism affects people; and

6. Work with the City Council to build alliances and partnerships with other organizations that are confronting racism.

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Glenn F. Elliott Jr., Mayor