



Fulton County Board of Commissioners

Agenda Item Summary

Agenda Item No.:

Meeting Date: 1/20/2021

Requested Action *(Identify appropriate Action or Motion, purpose, cost, timeframe, etc.)*

REQUEST APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION OF THE FULTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS TO DECLARE RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS IN FULTON COUNTY, TO ESTABLISH A TASKFORCE TO STUDY AND EVALUATE EXISTING COUNTY POLICIES, TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT POLICIES THAT PRIORITIZE ACCESS FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR TO HEALTH CARE AND OTHER RESOURCES THAT PROMOTE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES. **(Hall)**

1 **A RESOLUTION OF THE FULTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**
2 **TO DECLARE RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS IN FULTON COUNTY,**
3 **TO ESTABLISH A TASKFORCE TO STUDY AND EVALUATE EXISTING**
4 **COUNTY POLICIES, TO PROMOTE AND SUPPORT POLICIES THAT**
5 **PRIORITIZE ACCESS FOR PEOPLE OF COLOR TO HEALTH CARE AND**
6 **OTHER RESOURCES THAT PROMOTE HEALTHY LIFESTYLES, AND FOR**
7 **OTHER PURPOSES.**

8
9 **WHEREAS**, the American Public Health Association (APHA) has identified
10 racism as an “ongoing public health crisis,” noting that “[r]acism is a system of
11 structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of
12 how one looks (which is what we call "race"), that unfairly disadvantages some
13 individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and
14 communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of
15 human resources" -- APHA Past-President Camara Phyllis Jones, MD, MPH,
16 PhD;¹ and,

17 **WHEREAS**, Black Americans and other people of color have been refused
18 the dignities outlined in the United States Constitution for more than 400 years;
19 and,

20 **WHEREAS**, the State of Georgia has been an arena for heinous
21 manifestations of racism throughout its history, including its threat to leave the
22 Constitutional Convention in 1787 if the slave practice were banned²; the
23 passage and enforcement of Jim Crow laws that institutionalized racism and

¹ See American Public Health Association. <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>. (Retrieved January 12, 2021).

² See Constitutional Rights Foundation. *The Constitution and Slavery*. <https://www.crf-usa.org/black-history-month/the-constitution-and-slavery#:~:text=But%20the%20three%20states%20that,extend%20the%20date%20to%201808> (Retrieved January 12, 2021).

1 segregation³; the perpetuation of disparities in health outcomes through the
2 segregation of Grady Memorial Hospital from its inception through 1965⁴; and
3 countless injustices that have sustained race-based differences in socioeconomic
4 status in this state; and

5 **WHEREAS**, according to the U.S. Small-area Life Expectancy Estimates
6 Project (USALEEP), a study produced by the National Center for Health
7 Statistics and the National Association for Public Health Statistics, and
8 Information Systems in collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation,
9 the life expectancy in the County's predominately White neighborhood of
10 Buckhead is 87.2 years, while the life expectancy in the predominantly Black
11 neighborhood of Bankhead is 63.6 years⁵, and

12 **WHEREAS**, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners acknowledge that
13 minorities are disproportionately impacted by socioeconomic inequalities within
14 its jurisdiction that limit access to health services and have negative
15 repercussions on other social determinants of health including adverse childhood
16 experiences, crime, education, employment, housing, transportation, and food

³ See Hatfield, Edward A. *Segregation* in New Georgia Encyclopedia, 2007, June 1).
<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/segregation>; see also Brookings
Institution. (2019, October 14). *America's formerly redlined neighborhoods have changed, and so must
solutions to rectify them*. [https://www.brookings.edu/research/americas-formerly-redlines-areas-changed-
so-must-solutions/](https://www.brookings.edu/research/americas-formerly-redlines-areas-changed-so-must-solutions/)

⁴ See Lovasik BP, Rajdev PR, Kim SC, Srinivasan JK, Ingram WL, Sayed BA. "The Living Monument":
The Desegregation of Grady Memorial Hospital and the Changing South. *Am Surg*. 2020 Mar 1;86(3):213-
219. PMID: 32223800.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32223800/#:~:text=Virtually%2C%20every%20aspect%20of%20care,activists%20brought%20change%20to%20Atlanta.>

⁵ See National Center for Health Statistics. U.S. Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project
(USALEEP): Life Expectancy Estimates File for {Jurisdiction}, 2010-2015]. National Center for Health
Statistics. 2018. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/usaleep/usaleep.html>; see also Brash, Ben
and Peebles, Jennifer. (2019, November 11). *By neighborhood: How long on average a person lives in
metro Atlanta*. [https://www.ajc.com/news/local/neighborhood-how-long-average-person-lives-metro-
atlanta/n3FI2Ki1UfysL38SqS4kXK/](https://www.ajc.com/news/local/neighborhood-how-long-average-person-lives-metro-atlanta/n3FI2Ki1UfysL38SqS4kXK/)

1 access; and

2 **WHEREAS**, Fulton County conducted a study of Access to Health Food
3 Analysis and identified “127 low-income Census Block Groups in Fulton County
4 with a geographic center 1 mile outside of the service area of any grocery and
5 produce stores and with more than 40 households without access to a vehicle”⁶
6 ; and

7 **WHEREAS**, Food access is a major determinant of chronic disease
8 outcome, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture⁷; and

9 **WHEREAS**, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners has committed to
10 supporting initiatives that promote, “...a thriving economy, safe neighborhoods,
11 healthy residents, and a rich quality of life that all people can enjoy”⁸; and

12 **WHEREAS**, the Fulton County Board of Health commissioned the Georgia
13 State University through its Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) to conduct a
14 Community Health Assessment in Fulton County and to assess disparities and
15 barriers to achieving the Fulton County goal that All People Are Healthy; and,

16 **WHEREAS**, the Community Health Assessment confirms, parallels, and
17 builds upon the findings of the Georgia Department of Public Health that Black
18 residents of Fulton County have lower life expectancies than White residents, are
19 far more likely than people of other races to die prematurely, and are far more

⁶ See Fulton County. Access to Healthy Foods Analysis.
<https://performance.fultoncountyga.gov/stories/s/Access-to-Healthy-Foods-Analysis/b5hq-p75b/>.
(Retrieved January 12, 2021).

⁷ See United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service (July 2017). *Food Insecurity, Chronic Disease, and Health Among Working-Age Adults*. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=84466>; see also United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service (updated 2020, September 24) *Food Security*. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-choices-health/food-access/>

⁸ See <https://www.fultoncountyga.gov/inside-fulton-county/fulton-county-initiatives>.

1 likely than people of other races to die of heart disease or stroke; that African
2 Americans and Hispanic residents are twice as likely to be in poverty as their
3 racial and ethnic peers; that infant and maternal mortality rates among Black
4 families are two to four times the rate of any other racial or ethnic group; and that
5 Black residents are most impacted by HIV when compared to their White and
6 Asian counterparts; and,

7 **WHEREAS**, the Fulton County Board of Health adopted a Resolution to
8 Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis on July 22, 2020, reinforcing the work of
9 its Health Equity Workgroup which is designed to examine the agency’s internal
10 structure, policies, and procedures to ensure the Fulton County Board of Health
11 operates as an anti-racist and unbiased organization, and making it a priority to
12 “seek and incorporate collaboration with community partners and public health
13 stakeholders and participate in advantageous national, state, and local public
14 health efforts designed to thwart racist public health policies, practices, and
15 systems that do a disservice to our community;” and,

16 **WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated
17 existing health disparities that specifically impact the Black community. Black
18 people constitute 31% of the population of Georgia, but account for 49% of the
19 COVID-19 related deaths in the state. The rate of positive COVID-19 tests
20 among Black people is consistently significantly higher than the rates of positive
21 tests among people from other racial backgrounds⁹; and

22 **WHEREAS**, as we follow data highlighting the disproportionate impact of
23 COVID-19 on minority communities, it is abundantly clear that racial disparities

⁹ See Fulton County Board of Health Epidemiology Report, October 5, 2020, Table 24.

1 not only put communities at higher risk for tragedy in the setting of a pandemic,
2 but underlying health conditions in our communities consistently progress to
3 devastating end-stage pathology¹⁰; and

4 **WHEREAS**, the negative repercussions of racism in a historical context, as
5 well as the ongoing and systematic marginalization of Black people in sectors
6 such as home ownership have produced tremendous income disparities.
7 Significant impediments to fair housing for minorities exist in Fulton County, as
8 highlighted in the Regional Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice
9 published in September 2020 by the City of Atlanta and Fulton County, indicating
10 in part that “[o]ver 28% of Black households in Atlanta are severely cost
11 burdened, that is, spend 50% or more of their incomes on housing expenses.
12 The rate of severe cost burdening among white households in Atlanta is half this
13 rate. In Fulton County, the disparity in severe cost burdens is even greater. While
14 25% of Hispanic households and 23% of Black households in the county are
15 severely cost burdened, the issue affects less than 10% of white households.”¹¹
16 There are clear data to support the negative impact that racism in educational
17 opportunities and home ownership has on generational poverty in the lives of
18 racial minorities in our community; and

19 **WHEREAS**, numerous studies have shown that police officers are more
20 likely to use non-lethal and lethal force during encounters with Black people in

¹⁰ See Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2020, July 24). *Health Equity Considerations and Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups*. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html>

¹¹ See Fulton County and the City of Atlanta, Georgia. (September 2020). *2020 Joint Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice* <https://www.atlantaga.gov/home/showdocument?id=48283> at page 270.

1 America, police officers are more likely to use force with Black people even when
2 they are compliant, and Black people are less likely to have a weapon in
3 situations in which force is used; and

4 **WHEREAS**, the American Psychological Association, American College of
5 Physicians, and the American Public Health Association have all determined that
6 the threat of hate crimes resulting in the death of Black people and people of
7 color incites trauma, fear, violence, chronic and acute mental stress and other
8 negative impacts of discrimination which impact the general health and wellbeing
9 of the entire community; and

10 **WHEREAS**, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners recognizes that
11 the function of democracy is to represent the needs of all constituents, and
12 tremendous support of the declaration that racism is a public health crisis has
13 been demonstrated by the attached petition. Without promoting equity in all
14 sectors of public life, including reducing and eliminating disparities in health
15 outcomes and the social determinants of health, our county can never move
16 forward in advancing all communities, especially those that our nation
17 continuously and systematically ignores, destroys, and disenfranchises; and

18 **WHEREAS**, the Fulton County Board of Commissioners has committed to
19 improving the health of disadvantaged populations through initiatives such as
20 The Healthy Georgia Solution, a partnership with Grady Health System created
21 to “adopt innovative solutions to increase coverage and access to quality
22 healthcare services to the uninsured,” and seeks to enter into similar
23 partnerships to ensure that it is making progress to reverse and overcome the

1 deleterious impacts of systemic racism for its residents.

2 **NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Fulton County Board of
3 Commissioners does hereby declare racism a public health crisis in Fulton
4 County, Georgia.

5 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Fulton County Board of
6 Commissioners hereby establishes a task force to be known as the “Taskforce
7 for Racial Equity in All Policies” to study and evaluate existing County policies,
8 services, and programs, to determine if any of these tend to promote or sustain
9 racial disparities, and to provide recommendations to the Board for revision,
10 repeal, or modifications to such policies, services, and programs, or the adoption
11 of additional policies, services, and programs necessary to ensure equity.

12 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Taskforce for Racial Equity in All
13 Policies shall be comprised as follows:

- 14 (a) Each Commissioner shall appoint one (1) member, who shall each be
15 a resident of, or work in Fulton County, and shall have experience or
16 expertise in racial equity, civil rights, and/or social issues, or be
17 otherwise deemed qualified by the appointing commissioner to serve
18 as a Taskforce member;
- 19 (b) The Director of the Fulton County Department of Behavioral Health
20 and Developmental Disabilities or his or her appointee;
- 21 (c) An appointee from the NAACP-Atlanta Chapter;
- 22 (d) An appointee from the Georgia Coalition for the People’s Agenda;
- 23 (e) An appointee from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference;

1 (f) An appointee from The Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent
2 Social Change;

3 (g) An appointee from the Center for Civil and Human Rights; and

4 (h) An appointee from the Concerned Black Clergy of Metropolitan Atlanta.

5 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that an appointee shall be requested and
6 urged to participate from the Fulton County Board of Health.

7 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Taskforce shall be obligated to take
8 written minutes of all meetings, to document attendance of members at the
9 meetings, and to make public its meeting minutes.

10 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Taskforce shall meet no less often
11 than once a month for the first year, and will report its official recommendations
12 to Board of Commissioners by the end of 2021 calendar year, and shall thereafter
13 meet at least quarterly to make further necessary recommendations and monitor
14 the progress of the County's efforts to make all necessary changes to reform its
15 policies, services, and programs.

16 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Fulton County Attorney shall prepare
17 the Bylaws for the Taskforce, under which the Taskforce shall operate.

18

19 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Fulton County Board of
20 Commissioners shall partner and build alliances with local organizations that
21 have a legacy and track record of confronting racism.

22 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Fulton County Board of
23 Commissioners does hereby support Local, State, and Federal initiatives that

1 advance social justice and combat racism.

2 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Fulton County Board of
3 Commissioners encourages community partners and stakeholders in the
4 education, employment, housing, criminal justice and safety arenas to recognize
5 racism as a public health crisis and to activate all methods for rooting out racism
6 in their policies, practices, and partnerships.

7 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Fulton County Board of
8 Commissioners pledges to work to secure adequate resources to successfully
9 combat racism and its deleterious impacts to the health, happiness, and
10 economic security of our communities of color.

11 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Fulton County Board of
12 Commissioners supports and commends the Fulton County Board of Health for
13 its Resolution Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in Fulton County, Georgia,
14 and shall continue to support the efforts of the Fulton County Board of Health to
15 provide access to health care, tools for health promotion, and access to healthy
16 food and exercise opportunities to communities of color, especially within the
17 impoverished and underserved neighborhoods of Fulton County.

18 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Fulton County Board of
19 Commissioners shall advocate locally through its partners such as Association
20 County Commissioners of Georgia and through the National Association of
21 Counties for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and
22 supports local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that advance efforts to
23 dismantle systemic racism.

