By County Executive Abele and Supervisor Nicholson File No. 19-397

**A RESOLUTION**

Requesting approval to recognize April 1-7 as National Public Health Week and supporting Milwaukee County’s commitment to achieve racial equity and transform systems and institutions impacting the health of our community

WHEREAS, National Public Health Week is sponsored by the American Public Health Association to raise awareness of the relationship between the health of individuals and the health of their communities; and

WHEREAS, National Public Health Week focuses on a different public health topic every day of the week including, healthy communities, violence prevention, rural health, technology and public health, climate change and global health; and

WHEREAS, the promotion of healthy communities is directly related to the health of individuals and encourages expanding public health support networks to decrease racial disparities in health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, communities of color are disproportionally impacted by social determinants of health, such as increased exposure to lead, poor air quality, lack of safe places to walk, bike or run, and inadequate health education; and

WHEREAS, Milwaukee is considered one of the most segregated cities in the United States, resulting in wide health disparities among its racial populations; and

WHEREAS, race is a social construction with no biologic basis; and

WHEREAS, racism is a social system with multiple dimensions, including individual racism, which is internalized or interpersonal and systemic racism, which is institutional or structural and is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and depletes the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources; and

WHEREAS, racism causes persistent racial discrimination in housing, education, employment, transportation, and criminal justice and an emerging body of research demonstrates that racism is a social determinant of health; and

WHEREAS, African Americans comprise 26.2% of Milwaukee County’s total population, the largest throughout Wisconsin counties; and

WHEREAS, more than 100 studies have linked racism to negative health outcomes; and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services determined that African Americans and Native Americans have the highest excess death rates at every stage in the life course, and the infant mortality rate of non­Hispanic black infants is the highest in the nation; and

WHEREAS, the 2016 infant mortality rate in Milwaukee County among African American mothers was 13.1 deaths per 1,000 births, compared to their white counterparts, a rate of 4.9 deaths per 1,000 births; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, African American mothers were connected to prenatal care during their first and third-trimesters at 59.8% and 9.7% respectively, while white mothers received prenatal care during their first and third-trimesters at 78.6% and 3.3% rates in Milwaukee County; and

WHEREAS, County Health Rankings (using 2016 data) place Milwaukee County residents in a tie for 70th out of 72 Wisconsin Counties, indicating that residents averaged 4 “physically unhealthy days” in the past 30 days;

WHEREAS, Healthiest Wisconsin 2020 states that, "Wisconsin must address persistent disparities in health outcomes and the social, economic, educational, and environmental inequities that contribute to them"; and

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Public Health Association is committed to achieving health equity and convened a Racial Equity Workgroup in 2017; and

WHEREAS, while there is no epidemiologic definition of "crisis", the health impact of racism clearly rises to the definition proposed by Galea: "The problem must affect large numbers of people, it must threaten health over the long-term, and it must require the adoption of large­scale solutions”; and

WHEREAS, Milwaukee County created the Office on African American Affairs to serve in an integral role in recognizing and aiding in the resolution of Milwaukee County’s racial inequities for the benefit of all of its citizenry, and for the region to achieve its full potential; and

WHEREAS, with support from community partners and the Office on African American Affairs, it is Milwaukee County’s responsibility to address racism, including seeking solutions to reshape the discourse and actively engaging all citizens in racial justice work; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, that Milwaukee County will:

* Assert that racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire society
* Assess internal policy and procedures to ensure racial equity is a core element of Milwaukee County, led by the County Executive and Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors, in collaboration with the Office on African American Affairs, Racial Equity Ambassador Workgroup, and other relevant parties
* Work to create an inclusive organization identifying specific activities to increase diversity across its workforce and in leadership positions
* Incorporate inclusion and equity into organizational practice, offer educational trainings/activities to expand employees' understanding of how racism affects individuals, the health of marginalized populations, and provide tools to assist members to engage actively and authentically with communities of color
* Advocate for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color, and support local, state, and federal initiatives that advance social justice, while also encouraging individual employee advocacy
* Encourage other local, state, and national entities to recognize racism as a public health crisis

; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby supports Milwaukee County efforts to address public health disparities due to racial inequities throughout Milwaukee County.