

**SHAWNEE COUNTY RESOLUTION TO DECLARE RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS
WITH A COMMITMENT TO ACTION**

WHEREAS, Black/African American, Indigenous, Hispanic/Latino, and other people of color face economic injustice, social deprivation, and health inequities because racist policies, regulations, and laws created opportunity for some and barriers for others; and

WHEREAS, structural racism refers to the totality of ways in which societies foster racial discrimination through mutually reinforcing systems of housing, education, employment, earnings, benefits, credit, transportation, media, health care, and criminal justice that in turn reinforce discriminatory beliefs, values, and distribution of resources; and

WHEREAS, in Shawnee County, the average median household income is \$43,1600 for Black/African American households and \$51,284 for Hispanic/Latino households, compared to \$70,010 for non-Latinx whites; (1) and

WHEREAS, 52% of Black/African American and 36% of Hispanic/Latino residents in Shawnee County cannot afford to rent a safe and decent quality two-bedroom unit. (7)

WHEREAS, in Topeka/Shawnee County, 26.7% of Black/African American and 21.8% of Hispanic/Latino residents live in poverty, as compared to 13.5% of whites (3).

WHEREAS, in Topeka/Shawnee County, unemployment affects 13.3% of Black/African American and 3.8% of Hispanic/Latino residents compared to 3.7% of whites. (8)

WHEREAS, in Topeka/Shawnee County, 13.5% of Black/African American and 12.9% of Hispanic/Latino residents 25 or older have a bachelor's degree or higher, as compared to 31.2% of whites. (5)

WHEREAS, the population of Topeka is 10.2% Black/African American and 16.4% Hispanic/Latino but are involved in 43% recorded incidents of officer use of force. Data for Shawnee County Sheriff is not published. (6) (9) **WHEREAS**, more than 100 studies have linked racism to negative health outcomes, including research supporting that the cumulative experience of racism throughout one's life can induce chronic stress and increase susceptibility to chronic health conditions that lead to otherwise preventable deaths. The American College of Physicians has found that Black/African American individuals in particular are at risk of being subjected to discrimination and violence against them because of their race, endangering them and even costing them their lives. The U.S. National Institutes of Health reports that multiple studies suggest that experiences of racism or discrimination raise the risk of emotional and physical health problems, including depression, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, and even death. The American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Family Physicians have declared hate crimes a public health concern. The Surgeon General of California found that racism is a risk factor for toxic stress, a root cause of some of the most harmful, persistent and expensive health challenges facing our nation; and

WHEREAS, experiencing racism can increase stress hormones and lead to activation of the immune and inflammatory systems; changes in brain structure; elevation of blood pressure and blood sugar; and changes in how genes are read, which are associated with increased risk for numerous mental and physical chronic health conditions, like heart disease, cancer, asthma, stroke, Alzheimer's, diabetes, and suicide.; and

WHEREAS, in Shawnee County, 56.1/10,000 of Black/African American adults were hospitalized with diabetes, as compared to 21.7/10,000 of white adults (2); and

WHEREAS, in Shawnee County, the infant mortality rate is 17.4 per 1,000 Black/African American births, compared to 4.6 for white births (2); and

WHEREAS, in Shawnee County, Black/African American residents die prematurely with a total of 17,300 years of potential life lost compared to whites at 8,000 years of potential life lost. (4)

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that the Commissioners of Shawnee County publicly asserts that racism is a public health crisis in Shawnee County affecting all members of our Shawnee County and all of Kansas; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Shawnee County departments should prevent biased policy decision-making and implementation through protocols that require equity analysis through staff training on equity, bias, and cultural sensitivity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Shawnee County calls upon all Shawnee County elected officials and departments to continue, with urgency, the review of policies and procedures for the purposes of eradicating implicit and explicit racial bias and develop instead policies and procedures that build racial equity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Shawnee County departments should ensure equal and unbiased law enforcement and criminal justice through policies on policing practices, adequate accountability measures instilled in law enforcement contracts, through training, and publishing data on arrests and use of forces for public view. Data on sentencing recommendations by the District Attorney's office should be kept and published; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Shawnee County should always promote policies and grant funding opportunities, both in procurement and in distribution, that prioritize the health of all people, especially people of color, and address at least one area of the social determinants of health.

Citations

- (1) Kansas Health Matters, 2018-2022, American Community Survey 5-Year :
<https://www.kansashealthmatters.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=315&localeId=1028>
- (2) Kansas Health Matters, Measurement Period 2017-2021, Shawnee County
<https://www.kansashealthmatters.org/indicators/index/view?indicatorId=1364&localeId=1028>
Kansas Department of Health and Environment
- (3) U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts:
<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S1701?g=160XX00US2071000>
Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months, 2022 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S1701
- (4) County Health Rankings & Roadmap:
<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/explore-health-rankings/kansas/shawnee?year=2023>
Years of Potential Life Lost Before Age 75 per 100,000 population (age-adjusted) 2018-2020
- (5) U.S. Census Bureau:
<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S1501?t=Education&g=160XX00US2071000>
Education Attainment, 2022: ACS 5-Year Estimates S1501
- (6) Topeka Police Department 2022 Year End Use of Force Report:
<https://cot-wp-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/police/2022+Year+End+UoF+Statistics.pdf>
- (7) Topeka Citywide Housing Market Study and Strategy, 2020, pg. 21:
<https://cot-wp-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/planning/HS/TopekaHousingStudy.pdf>
- (8) U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts:
<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST5Y2022.S2301?t=Employment&g=160XX00US2071000>
Employment Status in the Past 12 Months, 2022: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates S2301
- (9) U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, Topeka, Kansas
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/topekacitykansas>