



# KING COUNTY

1200 King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

## Signature Report

### Motion 15655

**Proposed No.** 2020-0240.2

**Sponsors** McDermott, Kohl-Welles, Zahilay,  
Balducci and Dembowski

1                   A MOTION declaring racism a public health crisis and  
 2                   endorsing the declarations of the King County executive,  
 3                   public health - Seattle & King County and the King County  
 4                   board of health.

5                   WHEREAS, racism has deep and harmful impacts that unfairly disadvantages  
 6                   Black, Indigenous and People of Color ("BIPOC") and unfairly advantages people who  
 7                   identify as white, and

8                   WHEREAS, racism harms every person in our society and is a root cause of  
 9                   poverty and economic inequality, and

10                  WHEREAS, "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere," as King  
 11                  County's namesake, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said, and

12                  WHEREAS, whether intended or not, racism becomes ingrained in institutional  
 13                  policies and practices, creating differential access to opportunities and resources, and  
 14                  causes disparate outcomes in all aspects of life affecting health and well-being, and

15                  WHEREAS, by maintaining the status quo and existing systems of power and  
 16                  privilege based on our country's long history and continued persistence of white  
 17                  supremacy, institutional policies and practices do not need to be explicitly racist in order  
 18                  to have racist impacts on residents, and

19                  WHEREAS, systemic racism is manifest in the culture that exists within and

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20 across institutions and systems and the racist effects of policies and practices of those  
21 institutions can persist even once they have been changed, and

22 WHEREAS, reversing the legacy of institutional racism calls for an intentional  
23 commitment to anti-racist policies and practices and an understanding of the  
24 intersectional nature of power and oppression that amplify adverse effects on people who  
25 experience more than one form of marginalization, such as race, gender, sexual  
26 orientation and disability, and

27 WHEREAS, a public health approach to ending racism calls for eliminating  
28 disparities, promoting health, and eliminating disease, taking into consideration data on  
29 social determinants of health including socioeconomic status, education, neighborhood  
30 and physical environment, employment and social support networks to identify  
31 interventions to preserve and promote well-being of whole communities, and

32 WHEREAS, King County residents of color have deep wells of resilience and  
33 strength, and some BIPOC communities are less likely to experience other health  
34 conditions, such as suicide, Alzheimer's disease and drug and alcohol-related conditions  
35 than their white counterparts, and

36 WHEREAS, as a result of racism, BIPOC are afforded fewer chances to access  
37 opportunities and experience inequities that affect education, jobs, earning power,  
38 economic mobility, food access, adequate and safe housing, transit access, higher rates of  
39 policing and involvement in the criminal legal system and overall quality of life, and

40 WHEREAS, decades of data collected by public health - Seattle & King County  
41 have demonstrated how systemic racism contributes to BIPOC communities experiencing  
42 both acute impacts such as gun violence, and chronic impacts such as higher rates of

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43 cardiovascular disease and diabetes, maternal and infant mortality, underweight babies  
44 and shorter, less-healthy lives overall, and

45 WHEREAS, the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 on our BIPOC  
46 communities is a present-day demonstration of the systemic racism in institutions and  
47 systems that have not valued and supported human life equitably, and

48 WHEREAS, housing is one of the best-known social determinants of health and  
49 according to a 2017 report on housing by the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality,  
50 generations of BIPOC families have been disenfranchised through government  
51 authorized practices such as the Federal Housing Administration's program of redlining  
52 and the systematic exclusion of Black veterans from receiving low-interest mortgages  
53 guaranteed through the GI bill, which contributes to the lack of generational wealth in  
54 Black communities shown through data indicating that while seventy-one percent of  
55 white families live in owner-occupied housing, only forty-one percent of Black families  
56 and forty-five percent of Hispanic families do, and

57 WHEREAS, according to data from the Sentencing Project, Black people are 5.9  
58 times as likely to be incarcerated than whites, one in three Black men can expect to go to  
59 prison in his lifetime and, according to data of known police killings analyzed by  
60 Mapping Police Violence, Black people have been twenty-eight percent of those killed  
61 while they are thirteen percent of the population, and

62 WHEREAS, we recognize that historically and currently King County has been  
63 complicit in maintaining and perpetuating structural racism, and that as an institution  
64 King County must stand in support of dismantling oppressive systems grounded in white  
65 supremacy, and

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66 WHEREAS, King County government has committed to intentionally leading  
67 with racial justice to confront the historical and racial inequities that continue to exist in  
68 our community and our organization, and

69 WHEREAS, in 2008 the King County executive joined with public health -  
70 Seattle & King County to launch the equity and social justice initiative and later, in 2010,  
71 the King County council passed an equity and social justice ordinance and the 2016-2022  
72 Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan leads with racial justice, and

73 WHEREAS, across the country local governments have taken action to declare  
74 racism a public health crisis including the cities of Boston, Cleveland and Columbus,  
75 Ohio, Franklin County, Ohio, the Indianapolis City-County Council in Indiana and the  
76 Tacoma-Pierce County Board of Health, and

77 WHEREAS, the King County council is committed to addressing racial equity  
78 and health disparities in all forms and at all levels, which are the individual, institutional  
79 and systemic levels, across the county, and

80 WHEREAS, the King County council stands with the residents of King County to  
81 declare racism as a public health crisis, and endorses the declarations of racism as a  
82 public health crisis made by the King County executive and public health - Seattle &  
83 King County on June 11, 2020, and the board of health in its declaration of racism as a  
84 public health crisis passed by resolution on June 18, 2020;

85 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Metropolitan King County  
86 Council:

87 The council:

88 A. Declares racism a public health crisis;

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89           B. Commits to maintain and incorporate into its work a public health approach to  
90 addressing institutional and systemic racism across King County government, and to  
91 rectify historic and current day trauma and disproportionality;

92           C. Recognizes that eliminating racist policies and practices and the conditions  
93 that result in disparate access to resources and opportunities based on race requires  
94 engaging and being responsive to communities and residents impacted by racism,  
95 especially Black and Indigenous communities, as partners in identifying and  
96 implementing antiracist solutions, policies and practices;

97           D. Commits to using its authority to enact anti-racist policies and practices that  
98 will meet human needs, promote healthy and strong communities, reduce structural  
99 inequities and advance equity and justice by eliminating policies and practices designed  
100 to oppress marginalized people; and

101           E. Commits to implement and advocate for policies and procedures to ensure  
102 residents impacted by racism, especially Black and Indigenous communities, are not  
103 subject to violence at the hands of law enforcement, including ensuring appropriate levels  
104 of oversight and accountability for law enforcement and eliminating policies and

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105 practices that result in overpolicing, increased engagement with the justice system and  
106 violence directed towards communities of color and marginalized communities.  
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Motion 15655 was introduced on 7/7/2020 and passed by the Metropolitan King County Council on 7/24/2020, by the following vote:

Yes: 8 - Ms. Balducci, Mr. Dembowski, Ms. Kohl-Welles, Ms. Lambert, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Upthegrove, Mr. von Reichbauer and Mr. Zahilay  
No: 1 - Mr. Dunn

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

DocuSigned by:  
*Claudia Balducci*  
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Claudia Balducci, Chair

ATTEST:

DocuSigned by:  
*Melani Pedroza*  
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Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

**Attachments:** None