



GREATER DETROIT AREA HEALTH COUNCIL

June 5, 2020

Dear Members, Partners, and Friends,

There is no excuse for the unethical and disparaging treatment of any human being. Yet, we continue to witness behaviors that serve to undermine and diminish the spirits, livelihood, and capacity of entire races while belittling and ostracizing people who may be deemed “different” based on their skin color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, along with a plethora of characteristics that distinguish one person from another. In the U.S. we have for far too long found ways to rationalize such despicable behaviors, and allowed those in seeming levels of authority to exert unnecessary brutality while not being held accountable for actions that minimize the sanctity and dignity of other human lives.

The actions that have taken place over the past few months, punctuated by the brutal and senseless killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and countless others, at the hands of current or former police officers are additional injustices in a litany of racist events that undermine U.S. history, question the validity of the words found in our Declaration of Independence claiming that “all men are created equal,” and defy our nation’s expressed—yet unsubstantiated—commitment to human rights, freedom, and the sanctity of life itself.

It’s disheartening to hear individuals who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) speak of how they live with the expectation that they are not entitled to certain freedoms that are second nature to White Americans, all while fear and trepidation challenge their daily existence. Still, it is more egregious to hear BIPOC say that they are exhausted by the rhetoric and promises of change that never come—promises to identify and eliminate unconscious biases, overthrow systemic racism, and forge a path forward where racism, disparities, and inequality no longer exist.

As a people, a community, a nation, we can no longer allow any human being to live under appalling conditions and endure experiences that depress their sense of self and demoralize their spirits. Together, hand-in-hand, we must forge a pathway to a fair and equitable world where all people are truly equal and live in freedom and harmony. A world and country where equal opportunity and respect for all are demanded and create a new foundation for society.

As advocates for equitable and safe health care, the GDAHC team sees first-hand how individuals exposed to negative Social Determinants of Health, which represent the environments where many BIPOC live, often do not have access to affordable and appropriate health care services, thereby contributing to poor health outcomes. The COVID pandemic and its disproportionate impact on BIPOC brought this situation to the attention of the public, and the recent senseless killings have served to further underscore the need to address the public health crises brought about by racism and implicit bias. While awareness of a problem may be the first step toward recovery, we are a long way from defining and implementing solutions.

GDAHC, as a neutral, trusted community convener, that brings together the disparate and often competing voices of all constituents in the health care sector—those who get care, give care, and pay for care—knows the importance and value of diversity and inclusion in crafting and building viable solutions. We are successful as an organization because we use a collective impact approach that considers and integrates feedback from all impacted parties. GDAHC’s entire team is dedicated to improving the lives and livelihoods of those who live, work, play, and pray in Southeast Michigan and beyond. Our commitment to equity is integral to all we do. Today, we promise to up our game by leveraging our expertise in community convening to identify and act on opportunities to address disparities in health and health care, making certain to hold the difficult discussions that are necessary to begin to right many wrongs, and to heal the hearts of members of our community.

GDAHC recognizes that changing our national culture and moving forward together to fight racial injustice and inequality and eliminating disparities in health care must start with uncomfortable conversations and that our collective journey will be tough. We can do it—collectively we must and we will fight intolerance and indifference. GDAHC most certainly does not have the answers or solutions; these must be developed and vetted collectively, with the right stakeholders at the table, including leaders from BIPOC communities who have been excluded from the table for far too long.

We are proud that our recognized and trusted approach to collaboration provide a safe table to host the necessary discussions to move along the narrative and outline essential action steps, and we commit to be an organizer and architect hosting these discussions and defining actions that must take place. We will also include a section on our website with links to resources to help people find support, guidance, and solace. Further, we expect and will demand that each of the individuals and organizations that GDAHC works with are as committed as we are to solving this long-standing injustice once and for all.

We ask that you join us in our efforts. The changes that are needed will take all of us working together.

Thank you for your support and partnership. Stay safe and well as we undertake this needed transition while continuing to navigate the uncharted waters of COVID-19. #BlackLivesMatter

Yours in peace and love,

Kate Kohn-Parrott
President and CEO
The Greater Detroit Area Health Council

GDAHC’s Diversity and Inclusion Policy

GDAHC demands diversity and inclusion from our staff, board, members, and all partners. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is demonstrated in everything that we do, from our day-to-day interactions to our expectations that all people are treated fairly in the health care delivery system and as equal members of our society. We actively fight implicit biases and seek to identify and resolve disparities through every project we undertake. Equity, compassion, and integrity, cornerstones of diversity and inclusion, are our three most important core values. We have zero tolerance for breaches of this policy.