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revival that works

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TAKE ACTION NOW TO ADDRESS RACISM AS THE PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS FACING BLACK AMERICANS IN CONNECTICUT!

Racism is the number one public health crisis facing Black Americans. Immediate attention and intentional action are required to dismantle the systemic structures that have marginalized, oppressed, and killed Black people in this country at disproportionate rates.

The declining physical and mental wellbeing of Black Americans is evidence of the violence that has been inflicted through systemic racism. The public health crisis fueled by racism facing Black Americans manifests in a variety of ways, including:

- **Segregation**, contributing to disparate health outcomes by race and place, including lower life expectancy and higher asthma rates, diabetes, hypertension, and more.[1]

- **Cultural stereotypes**, imposing negative characterization on Blacks which has been demonstrated to result in inferior medical care for Black patients, abusive treatment at the hands of law enforcement, and increased rates of incarceration amongst black communities.

- **Discrimination**, contributing to increased individual and communal stress with attendant negative outcomes in physical health and mental health.

- **Opportunity gap**, limiting access to economic and educational resources resulting in higher levels of unemployment, lack of representation in positions of power, poverty and more.

During these crucial times, Connecticut is uniquely positioned to lead the charge in state policy reform and improve practices. The state of Connecticut must acknowledge the mental and physical harm that systemic racism has had on black and brown people and take immediate action to dismantle harmful structures.

[1] Michelle Williams and Jefferey Sanchez, Racism is Killing Black People. And it is Sickening them Too, Washington Post, June 4, 2020.

"Institutionalized racism in the United States originally manifested itself in historical events but persists today because of contemporary structural factors that perpetuate historical and social injustices."
- C.P. Jones; "Levels of Racism: A theoretic framework and a gardener's tale," American Journal of Public Health, 2000

Summary of Equitable Infrastructure Needs

- Restore the African American Commission in the state under a new title that is inclusive of the black diaspora. Recommended new name: "**The Permanent Commission on Black American Affairs**." This body will serve as the official state advocate agency for the Black American community to ensure that state government is accessible and accountable. Advising the Governor, Legislature and state agencies regarding policy development and implementation in order to further and enhance the civic, social, educational, cultural, and economic status of Black Americans throughout the state. The commission also works to establish relationships with local governments and private sector organizations that promote equal opportunity for Black Americans.

- Commit to a **Governor's racial equity policy agenda** that includes:

    - Commit to an equitable **health care agenda** that requires health care providers to provide medical practice/ care and billing transparency upfront, pilots expanded disease management program and mandates the development of a pandemic or health crisis response plan that prioritizes PPE supplies and testing for poor communities.

    - Commit to an equitable **public safety agenda** that calls for the documentation of civilian's race in police reports, mandates body cameras and establishes guidelines for racial equity training for state and municipal safety departments.

    - Commit to an equitable **criminal justice agenda** that implements compassionate release programs for individuals with less than a year left on their sentence, in prison for technical violations, who are parole eligible, and those who are unsentenced and incarcerated pre-trial. Ascribe clear requirements and differentials for medical isolation in comparison to solitary confinement.

    - Commit to an equitable **housing agenda** that invests to revitalize without displacement, enables tenant choice, balances the locations of government subsidized housing investments throughout the state, and reforms land use laws to give everyone an opportunity to thrive.

    - Commit to an equitable **housing agenda** that invests to revitalize without displacement, consult tenants about their housing locational preferences, balances the locations of government subsidized housing investments throughout the state, and reforms zoning so every town is responsible for zoning for its fair share of the state's affordable housing needs.

- Commit to an equitable **public education agenda** that includes a reopening plan for schools containing mental health supports for students due to traumas experienced during COVID-19, implementation of Black and Latino studies as described in PA 19-12—HB 7082, allocating resources to promote access to technology and internet for low income families.

Equitable Health Care Needs

- **Upfront Medical Care Transparency:** Requires health care providers to provide medical practice/ care and billing transparency upfront to patients and or proxy.

- **Humane Medication Access:** Increased diseased progression due to COVID-19 has exacerbated disproportionate health disparities such as heart disease and diabetes in Black communities. Chronic diseases pose a significant financial burden to minorities who already face disparities that are tied to social, economic, and environmental limitations. Expanding the role of Pharmacists can be the answer to the access problem for many who are unable to see a provider to manage their chronic diseases. Pilot extended disease control initiative allowing pharmacists to prescribe medication for disease management[2]. Enact laws to allow Advanced Practice Pharmacist to provide the disease management. Create programs that recycle high need pharmaceuticals.

- **Formalize Crisis Response for Low Income Communities:** The COVID-19 crisis has magnified the fact that most non-medical frontline workers who are deemed essential during times of crisis (e.g. grocery store workers, gas station attendants, utility workers etc.) are people of color from low income communities. For the safety of these workers and their families, low income communities must be prioritized to receive personal protective equipment (PPE).

- **Equitable Testing in Black Neighborhoods**: Collect and assess data on racial demographics of people requesting tests and investigate whether individuals of different races and ethnicities were able to be tested at similar rates. Explore racial and ethnic patterns for patients testing positive for Coronavirus and patients hospitalized for Coronavirus or suspected Coronavirus. Also collect data on the census tract for the residents of all of these categories allowing for an assessment of any connection to neighborhood conditions. (federal and state)

- **Responsive Testing & Contact Tracing:** Intensify testing for coronavirus and COVID-19 antibodies and contact tracing in areas most seriously affected, including Black communities.. Ensure that testing facilities are in easily accessible locations, staffed by culturally competent medical personnel, equipped to provide rapid results, and open for extended hours.

[2] CDC, Division of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention ,Pharmacy: Collaborative Practice Agreements to Enable Collaborative Drug Therapy Management, 2018

Equitable Public Safety Needs[3]

- **Police Funding Mandates:** Require municipal police departments that receive state funding to establish civilian review boards with subpoena power to investigate allegations of police misconduct. Divest state funding to municipal police departments and private prisons and reallocate funds to education, mental health support, childcare and other municipal supports.

- **Police Stops and Searches:** Reform police stops, searches and arrests by banning formal and informal quotas, ensure that officers inform people of their right to refuse or revoke consent to a search and seek warrants whenever possible, and require reporting, including racial data, on stops, searches and arrests.

- **Bias-Free Policing:** As part of an overall effort to promote bias-free policing, prohibit police officers from asking people about their sexual orientation and immigration status. Require all public (state and municipal) safety departments complete annual trainings on racism, equity and inclusion and procedural justice on topics like stops, searches, and arrests (see examples provided in *A New Era in Public Safety: A Guide to Fair, Safe, and Effective Community Policing*[4]). Departments that fail to complete annual trainings should not have access to future state funding.

- **Use of Force:** Establish a use of force policy that respects human life, is employed only when necessary, sets clear policies regarding all force instruments and specific force instruments, mandates the considerations of personal characteristics before using force, requires officers to intervene when improper force is being used and to render aid until medical assistance arrives, provides ongoing scenario-based training, and provides robust processes for investigating use of force. Knee and chokeholds should be banned statewide.

- **Crisis Intervention:** Develop community-based services to respond to and prevent crises, establish protocols for assessing and interaction with people with mental health or developmental disabilities or who are experiencing substance use disorder crises, properly train emergency operators and officers in basic techniques to identify and manage crises, partner with mental health and developmental disability co-responders and local providers, and track officer's responses to crises and assess crisis response programs.

- **Leadership and Culture:** Require that each municipal police department develop actionable strategic plans to promote diversity, develop performance-based requirements for promotion, promote a culture of equity and inclusion, and ensure that field training incorporates core diversity values and communicates them to new officers.

- **Recruitment, Hiring, Promotion, and Retention:** Promote policing as an honorable profession to young people, particularly from underrepresented groups, solicit community input on hiring

[3] Many recommendations here are drawn from Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights 2019, A new Era in Public Safety: A Guide to Fair, Safe, and Effective Community Policing, [YEAR], available at https://civilrights.org/wp-content/uploads/Policing_Full_Report.pdf
[4] Id.

decisions, promote mentoring opportunities and test preparation support for candidates from underrepresented backgrounds, and reevaluate hiring qualifications and testing.

- **False Civilian Reporting:** Pass legislation that criminalizes false 911 calls based on race, gender or religion as a hate crime.

- **Military Surplus Ban:** Ban the acceptance of military surplus items for local police departments.

- **Accountability Measures**:

    - **Civilian Review Boards:** Mandate Police Civilian Review Boards for each municipality and provide them with investigative and subpoena power. Require annual reports to municipalities' legislative bodies with specific metrics.

    - **Internal Policy Review:** Review all internal policies and procedures to assure that racial equity is a core element of the state and municipal public safety programs.

    - **Reporting Obligations:** Establish mandatory reporting obligations for any police officer who witnesses a fellow officer breaking the law, behaving in a racially discriminatory manner, or abusing his/her power.

    - **Independent Prosecutor:** Establish an independent state prosecutor reporting to the attorney general responsible for overseeing all complaints of police abuse.

    - **Use of Body Cameras:** Make body camera usage mandatory for all CT municipalities and State police. Apply strict penalties under state statute or ordinance for officers and municipalities when cameras are turned off when an officer is involved in shootings. Redefine excessive force under State and Local ordinance.

    - **Qualified Immunity Reform:** Eliminating the use of "qualified immunity" by municipalities and the state in defending law enforcement.

Equitable Criminal Justice Needs

- **Solitary Confinement Reporting:** Black people are disproportionately put in solitary confinement putting them at higher risk for mental illness such as depression, self-harm and for some resulting in suicide. Require reporting, including racial data, duration and frequency on the use of solitary confinement as a disciplinary response.

- **Compassionate Release Programs**: Rapidly decarcerate People who can be safely released. Decarceration is the only public health intervention that can realistically de-densify prisons, promote effective social distancing, and improve prison conditions according to public health officials and epidemiologists. Populations to consider for an initial immediate release include the approximately 2500 people with less than a year left on their sentence, the 1600 people in prison for technical violations, the 5351 people who are parole eligible, and the 3137 people who are unsentenced and incarcerated pre-trial.

- **Use Medical Isolation, not Solitary Confinement:** Ascribe clear requirements and differentials for medical isolation in comparison to solitary confinement. Follow the recommendations of David Cloud, JD, MPH, Dallas Augustine, MA, Cyrus Ahalt, MPP, & Brie Williams, MD, MS articulated in their paper, The Ethical Use of Medical Isolation – Not Solitary Confinement – to Reduce COVID-19 Transmission in Correctional Settings. In particular, medical isolation and quarantines must be narrowly tailored, temporally limited, and include rights guarantees.

- **Immediately Discontinue Transfers to Northern C.I.:** The conditions of confinement at Northern C.I. are deeply inhumane and are intrinsically punitive. Currently the plan to care for people positive with COVID-19 (excluding those with mental illness and young people) is sending them to Northern C.I. The conditions of this facility were ruled by a federal judge to be cruel and unusual.[5] Appropriate medical facilities or isolated housing units should be considered for Covid-positive individuals.

- **Increase Oversight:** Develop a thoughtful release plan in consultation with formerly incarcerated individuals, family members of incarcerated people, and appropriate reentry organizations. The CDOC must ensure that incarcerated people maintain access to phone calls with legal counsel. The CDOC should oversee medical isolation by way of the unit manager and not the shift commander. The unit manager must be directly accountable to the warden, medical director, and independent medical advisers. Incarcerated individuals must be assured that they will not be targeted for retaliation should they report inhumane conditions.

Equitable Community and Economic Development:

- **Racial focus in "Minority" Owned Business:** Revamp contract bidding process and requirements for Minority Owned Businesses with specifications to racial diversity. Minority owned businesses should be owned at least 51% by a person of color to qualify.

- **Address Environmental Justice:** Promote Environmental Justice strategies such as improving air and water quality, remediating brownfields, addressing lead contamination, improving waste disposal issues, and ensuring adequate environmental protections (for example, over permitting of pollutants) for communities of color.

- **Black Business Start-Up**: One of the most significant barriers to black business start-ups is the racial wealth gap. Black would-be entrepreneurs simply do not have equal access to the sources of informal capital (such as home equity and borrowing from friends and family) generally drawn upon to start a new business. We need to invest in Black businesses from the ground up.

- **Black Business Operations**: Connecticut's economic development strategy famously rewards existing businesses for things that they are already doing rather than investing in infrastructure in order to raise up all of our entrepreneurs. From high-speed, public broadband to back office supports, like bookkeeping and purchasing, we can make it easier for Black-owned businesses to thrive.

[5] Kelan Lyons, Federal Ruling on Conditions of Confinement Leaves State Unsure of Next Step, CT Mirror, 2019

- **Community Banks**: In the past few weeks we have seen that locally-controlled community-based financial institutions have effectively served small and minority-owned businesses ignored or abandoned by larger, national institutions. Support our few remaining community-based institutions financially and by directing governmental deposits and financial needs to local banks, credit unions, and loan funds.

- **Address Municipal Fiscal Disparities**: See recommendation in Housing below.

- **Public Transportation between Cities and Opportunities:** Access to jobs is often limited by lack of access to transportation. We need high quality, rapid bus service and additional investment in trains, with an eye to serving low-income people in our cities. A well-connected network of public transportation — which connects towns to cities — will help grow our economy and grow opportunities for everyone.

- **Biking Infrastructure between Cities and Opportunities.** Up to 1/3 of households in cities in our State — many of them black and brown — lack access to cars. Yet much of our biking infrastructure goes through suburbs and farmland only, with urban cores bypassed. A safe, protected, interconnected bike network within our urban cores and to opportunities beyond will help residents connect to opportunity and improve health outcomes.

- **Decrease Regulatory Barriers to Business Start-Up**: Certain industries – food, day care, barbershops and beauty parlors – have historically attracted low-income entrepreneurs. These industries are, however, highly regulated in ways that often erect unnecessary barriers to entry. The state should evaluate applicable food production, land use and zoning, and licensing regulations to ensure that these are actually working to protect health and safety rather than to exclude low-income entrepreneurs.

Equitable Housing Needs

- **Rescue Relief:** Immediately create a dedicated resource through prioritizing federal funding, reallocating state funding or through issuing bonds to cover back rent and utilities on behalf of renters who have suffered income reductions during the pandemic.

- **Preserve Homeownership:** Explore legal authority to amend mortgages to add unpaid mortgage payments for non-federally-backed mortgages during Coronavirus crisis period to mortgage principal.

    - **Extend Suspensions of Eviction and Foreclosure Actions:**

        - **For Cause Evictions:** Require that all evictions be for cause.

        - **No Rent/No Mortgage Payments During Health Crisis:** Suspend eviction and foreclosure filings and proceedings until 60 days after the public health emergency is over. Require that landlords qualifying for any Paycheck Protection Programs agree not to evict tenants for non-payment of rent during this period of crisis; convert back rent accrued during Coronavirus crisis period

to consumer debt to prevent eviction for households not covered by other protections.

- **Make it Harder for Out-of-Town Slumlords to Operate in Connecticut**: We need to heavily regulate rental housing quality both (1) to protect tenants' health and safety and (2) to take away out-of-town slumlords' economic incentive to underinvest in their properties and their neighborhoods. At the same time, we can invest in local landlords and owner-occupied properties through landlord training and our tax code.

- **Land Use Reforms:** Just as Northern cities embraced over-policing as a response to the Great Migration, our suburbs embraced overzealous zoning at the same time and for the same reasons. To this day, these codes prevent reasonably-priced housing from being built in high-resource suburbs and the results, given our massive racial wealth gap, are not only predictable but intended. These exclusionary codes not only exacerbate racial and economic inequality, they cost the state billions by raising the local cost of living. To address this, we must:

    - **Revolutionize Zoning.** Replace the system of local zoning, using a statewide standard for siting of housing and other things we know we need, or using regional bodies that operate under specific rules that expedite housing in high-opportunity areas." Form-based codes that focus on the form of buildings, rather than their uses, can also be an equitable regulatory framework.

    - **Change Housing Approvals Processes.** Whether through local, regional, or state bodies, expedite housing in areas of high opportunity. Prevent the imposition of arbitrary requirements, extended public hearings, and decision-making too beholden to status quo interests.

    - **Rethink Parking.** Countless housing projects have been prevented across the state because of onerous parking requirements. Communities ask for as many as 2.5 or 3 parking spaces for even one-bedroom affordable housing units, making it cost-prohibitive for developers. Capping the amount of parking that can be required through the land use approvals process will reduce the costs of housing and prevent overpaving of our green state.

    - **Upzone Transit Areas.** Right now, cities around Connecticut that receive State investments in train stations or CTfastrak stations do not have to change their zoning to enable the mixed-use development that would make the State's investment worthwhile. The State should override local zoning around areas where there are fixed nodes of transit, to ensure that we can get quality, mixed-use real estate development that goes hand in hand with transportation.

- Address Municipal Funding Issues:

    - **Address Municipal Fiscal Disparities:** Dramatically higher property taxes in the cities and inner ring suburbs where Black families disproportionately live are a direct assault on Black homeowners' and tenants' ability to accumulate wealth. The legislature has taken baby steps to equalizing property tax burdens but has not wrestled with the moral

obligation to equalize tax burdens across Connecticut municipalities.

- **Connect State Funding to Housing Choice:** Put provisions in place to ensure that emergency funds and longer-term investments made in response to the crisis do not create affordable housing opportunities only in high poverty areas of color, but instead locate affordable housing diversely through regions.

- **Support Affordable Homeownership**

  - **Invest in Black Home Ownership:** 75 years ago our country invested heavily in white home ownership, largely in the suburbs. We have never made a similar investment in Black home ownership and the results are apparent in our segregated housing patterns and massive racial wealth gap. We need to invest in Black home ownership and, in doing so, mirror the generosity of the subsidies whites received in the mid-20th century. We need programs that give Black families housing choice and do not cap their ability to accumulate equity.

  - **Mortgage Relief:** Explore legal authority to amend mortgages to add unpaid mortgage payments for non-federally-backed mortgages during Coronavirus crisis period to mortgage principal.

- **Universal Vouchers for Rental Housing with a Path to Homeownership:**

  - **Universal Vouchers:** The state should advocate for the federal government to expand the pool of housing vouchers available through the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program, ideally making access to housing vouchers a universal entitlement.
  - **Promote Homeownership:** Support the reconfiguration of the HCV program to better subsidize ownership opportunities (either individually or collectively).
  - **Statewide Market Value Vouchers**: The state should adopt market-based voucher values, known as Small Area Fair Market Rents to ensure vouchers can realistically be used all across the state.
  - **Mobility Counseling:** To ensure that an expanded voucher program empowers families' choices and promotes economic mobility rather than hardens lines of segregation the state should implement and expand its planned mobility counseling program.

  - **Regional Housing Authority Jurisdiction:** The state should allow municipal housing authorities to expand their areas of operation to 15 miles from town borders to expand affordable housing options regionally.

- **Property Acquisition/Land Banking:** The state should invest in two types of property acquisition/land banking:

  - **Places with Little Affordable Housing**: Purchase of existing multifamily properties and individual units as community or publicly controlled subsidized housing in areas with little affordable housing but meaningful access to healthy environments, opportunities like high performing schools and employment, and low levels of crime. Undertake land banking initiatives to do the same.

- **Places at Risk of Displacement:** Purchase of existing multifamily properties and individual units as community or publicly controlled subsidized housing in danger of displacement. Undertake land banking initiatives to do the same, especially where there is a danger of speculation by absentee owners.

- **Tenant Right to Purchase:** Expand Tenant Opportunity to Purchase laws, and dedicate acquisition funds to support tenant/nonprofit acquisition and ownership of existing private and public rental properties.

Equitable Public Education Needs

- **School Reopening Plan:** In response to the implicit trauma many disadvantaged students have experienced during the COVID-19 crisis funding must be provided to expand in school mental health supports including trainings for teachers and administrators on instructional techniques that integrate trauma informed care.

- **Equitable Access:** Strengthen the links between school and home by allocating resources to promote access to technology and internet for low income families.

- **In School Policing:** Mandate restrictions on physical restraints used by safety personnel (public officer or private hire) operating in a school setting and adherence to aforementioned use of force policy.

- **Cultural Education:** Follow up on the implementation of Black and Latino studies as described in PA 19-12—HB 7082

- **Training and Culture:** Require all educators complete annual trainings on racism, equity and inclusion.

- **Recruitment and Retention:** Commit to a budgeted line item amount that supports the hiring and retention of educators of color in all school districts; namely Black educators. Provide financial relocation, residency and retention incentives for educators of color (e.g., scholarships, short term loan forgiveness, sign-on bonuses, favorable mortgage approval and rates, etc.)

- **Explore Regional School Districts:** Appoint a committee of experts to produce a report on the practical steps that must be taken to convert the state's public school system to regional districts (rather than town-based districts).

- **Counseling, Not Policing:** To decrease the number of unnecessary detentions and suspensions and convert the culture of school policing to a culture of help and healing, invest school safety dollars in school counselors, psychologists, and proven strategies to help Black and brown children succeed. In addition, maintain accurate up-to-date records on the racial and ethnic demographics of students suspended or given detention.

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The recommendations and demands described in this document are representative of the collective thought, expertise and voice of the following individuals and organizations.

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