



## **Showing Up for Racial Justice Santa Barbara Board of Supervisor Statement on Racism as a Public Health Crisis**

On behalf of Showing Up for Racial Justice Santa Barbara, we support the adoption of the resolution concerning racism as a public health crisis that results in widespread inequities across health and mental wellness, education, employment, economic development, public safety, criminal justice, and housing in Santa Barbara County.

Systemic racism is deeply entrenched and pervasive. We are speaking today to ensure a shared understanding that any expectation to dismantle harmful structures that have been in place for over 400 years requires a commitment to unlearning and re-learning, unwavering persistence, and a degree of specificity we do not yet see in this resolution. We encourage you to consider the following issues more deeply:

**#1: The vague language of the resolution:** While this resolution includes extensive research on health inequities as intersecting outcomes of white supremacy, only two of the pledges provide any transparency for community members as to what the Board of Supervisors is specifically doing to address racism, the rest only mention broad ideologies or conceptual frameworks with little to no detail. This resolution cannot simply serve to “check the box” like so many other governments, businesses, and profit-oriented entities have done throughout history--especially since the murder of George Floyd.

**#2: The lack of actionable items in the resolution:** Page 4 of your resolution offers six pledges that all focus on health inequities in BIPOC communities, and states what the county will do to address them. We support these pledges while also seeking clarification about what systems of accountability, specific action steps, and evaluation tools the County will use to ensure that these pledges are demonstrated through action and implementation in every department throughout the County.

**#3: The limited scope of the measures:** While this resolution is focused on health inequities, we know that racism affects every department and service of the county. The traumas inflicted primarily upon BIPOC community members occur in *all* intersecting systems in our county, including education, mental wellness, employment and economic opportunity, all of which lie at the root of public health. We hope that this resolution is carried over to every area of the county, especially our criminal justice system where policing practices exhibit racial biases, as evidenced by the murders of local residents Meagan Hockaday and Bryan Carreno and countless other people of color throughout this country. The financial resources necessary to invest in our local communities, along with millions of additional dollars, can be found in the county’s “public safety” budget, where \$255,000,000+ of funds go toward unwanted supervision (Probation), prosecution (District Attorney), and violence through policing and

incarceration (Sheriff's). Every dollar of this budget must be examined through an antiracist lens if any real change is expected from this resolution.

**#4: Lack of infrastructure to support the resolution's success:** We want to emphasize that anti-racism training for all departments including the Board of Supervisors will be necessary in order for this resolution to be effective, because resolutions themselves do not dismantle systemic racism. Without buy-in from employees of the county at every level, we should expect this resolution to fail. Most importantly, the evaluation of this resolution must include county employees and community members of color who are most impacted by racism on a daily basis. Without an accountability structure that centers Black, Indigenous and People of Color, this resolution is destined to fail.

We see this resolution as the first step to addressing this public health crisis and we hope this signifies that the county is willing to make a long-term commitment to fighting racism. We assert that in order to be effective this resolution must be backed by: 1) more specific language, 2) actionable and measurable commitments, 3) far-reaching scope across all sectors of the county, and 4) supportive infrastructure in the form of anti racism training and accountability structures.

*Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) is a national network of groups and individuals working to undermine white supremacy and to work toward racial justice. Through community organizing, mobilizing, and education, SURJ moves white people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability. SURJ SB is the Santa Barbara Chapter of SURJ National. ###*

