

Date: April 9, 2020

To: Board of County Commissioners

From: Washington County Racial Equity Collaborative

Re: Staffing considerations for FY 2020-21

Dear County Commissioners:

The Washington County Racial Equity Collaborative (REC) understands that the Board is working hard to develop a budget for the upcoming fiscal year in the midst of an unprecedented crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Clearly, no person, entity, or institution is immune to the negative impacts of this disease, but the emerging evidence shows disproportionate health and economic impacts on communities of color that warrant a strong and continued focus on racial equity in the county.

You have some extremely difficult decisions to make with respect to policy and budget, the results of which will reflect your priorities as a Board, and the REC urges you to recall the County's Equity Resolution, adopted less than two months ago, as you choose those top priorities.

We applaud the sentiments expressed in the BOC's work session of April 7 by Chair Harrington, Commissioner Treece, and Commissioner Schouten that underscored the community's overwhelming support of this resolution, and the acknowledgement that the County is far behind other jurisdictions of its size and sophistication when it comes to addressing equity, both internally, and in service to the broader community.

We agree with Chair Harrington that the Office of Equity, Inclusion and Community Engagement be established and fully staffed, including the Chief Equity Officer and the four subordinate positions, without delay for FY 2020-21. By doing so, the County will convey its commitment to those who are harmed by existing policies, practices, institutions, and systems, and it will put into motion that which can serve to heal and strengthen them.

We know that this decision has a fiscal impact, but it is one that is long overdue. We ask that you continue to engage the REC and communities of color in your discernment and deliberations. The current social distancing measures create even more challenges for people to engage with you, and those most deeply impacted are simply struggling to survive. By sharing this message with you, we hope you can see their faces, hear their voices, and that you will respond with firm resolve to advocate on their behalf.

Sincerely,



Marcus C. Mundy, Executive Director



Glenn Montgomery, Executive Director



Bridget Cooke, Executive Director



Chi Nguyen, Executive Director



Nathan Teske, Executive Director



Cc: Stephen Rhodes, Interim County Administrator
Sia Lindstrom, Interim Assistant County Administrator