



**For Immediate Release**

**Media Contact: Terra Carrey**

**Email: mdhealthequity@gmail.com**

**Minnesota Doctors for Health Equity Leads Coalition of 9 Minnesota Physician Organizations Calling on State Leaders to Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis**

*Coalition represents >5,000 Minnesota physicians from across the state*

Minneapolis, Minnesota (June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020) - Minnesota Doctors for Health Equity, a statewide, grassroots physician organization that educates physicians and other health professionals to work towards health equity, today sent a letter to Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, Lt Governor Peggy Flanagan, Commissioner of Health Jan Malcom and other state leaders calling on them to declare racism a public health crisis. This letter was drafted by Minnesota Doctors for Health Equity's board and co-signed by leaders of 8 other Minnesota physician organizations including: Minnesota Association for African American Physicians, the Minnesota section of the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, Twin Cities Medical Society, Zumbro Valley Medical Society, the Minnesota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Minnesota Psychiatric Society and the Minnesota Society of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry.

Minnesota has long had some of the worst health outcomes for Black, Brown and Indigenous Minnesotans when compared to White Minnesotans. This can be tied back to structural racism in housing, transportation, criminal justice, education, environmental exposure, employment as well as the racism patients face in the health care system itself. This statement and call to action, signed by organizations representing >5,000 Minnesota physicians, acknowledges health care's complicity in upholding white supremacy and reproducing the inequitable outcomes we see in our state. It recommends initial steps to take and calls on Minnesota's world-renowned medical schools, health care systems, insurance plans and local governments to commit to accountability in addressing this long ingrained inequity. "Our system wields incredible power and works diligently to maintain this power - often through decisions made to promote financial returns instead of improving health outcomes of the most vulnerable. One cannot both endorse our current health system and state that Black Lives Matter. We must do more."

Several counties and cities around the country have declared racism a public health crisis through resolutions and ordinances and Hennepin County's board of commissioners is set to take up a resolution on June 30<sup>th</sup>

2020 that does the same. However no state has declared racism a public health crisis or used its resources in the manner that states have responded to the COVID19 public health crisis.

Minnesota Doctors for Health Equity President Michael Aylward said, “Imagine a disease that didn’t just kill individuals, but it shortened the life expectancy of a whole people. A disease that struck down infants and mothers at an alarming rate and left many of those who survived with lifelong health complications. This disease kills both violently and publicly as well as quietly and insidiously -- some of its victims make the headlines, but most die of cancer or heart disease or other preventable illness. Now imagine living in a state where that disease is endemic, and then imagine doing nothing about that disease for decades. This disease would be worth studying, preventing and, ultimately, eradicating because of the sheer magnitude of lives and potential that would be saved. This disease is racism. Racism is endemic to Minnesota, and eliminating racism must be a public health priority. As health providers in Minnesota, we have been complicit in allowing health disparities to persist. We must hold ourselves, our communities, the systems we work in, and the lawmakers who represent us accountable for improving the health of Black, Brown and Indigenous Minnesotans.”

Minnesota Doctors for Health Equity is a statewide, grassroots physician organization whose mission is to educate health professionals to work toward health equity and whose vision is that health professionals will use their voice, knowledge, and influence to eliminate the inequities that exist in health and healthcare, while working effectively with their patients, health systems, communities, and decision makers to address health equity wherever they live, work, learn, and play. You can find their letter to state leaders and more information here: <https://mdheq.org/>

##