

RESOLUTION NUMBER 2021-087

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ESTABLISHING MISSOULA COUNTY'S COMMITMENT TO A JUST, EQUITABLE, DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE (JEDI) MISSOULA COUNTY

WHEREAS, Missoula County is located on the ancestral land of the Séliš (Salish or "Flathead") and Qlispé (Kalispel or "Pend d'Oreille") Nations, and was and is a place also used by other Indigenous peoples, whom non-Indian settlers forced from the Missoula valley, sanctioned by the U.S. government; and

WHEREAS, this represents just one of the many policies in our nation's history that have perpetuated structural and systemic inequalities for generations, resulting in disparate outcomes for marginalized people; and

WHEREAS, Indigenous residents are disproportionately affected by health disparities, including but not limited to, chronic respiratory illnesses, cancer, substance misuse, depression, suicide, obesity and a variety of other social determinants of health, such as poverty and delayed healthcare. These health disparities stem from historic and contemporary institutionalized and systemic discrimination; and

WHEREAS, Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC) make up almost 8% of the Missoula population but disproportionately make at or below 80% of the area median income²; and

WHEREAS, BIPOC represent 30% of those incarcerated at the Missoula County Detention Facility, despite making up 8% of the overall Missoula County population³; and

WHEREAS, 19,375 Missoula County residents (16.2%) are aged 65 years old and over, and

WHEREAS, chronic health conditions disproportionately affect older people. The CDC indicates 85% of older adults have at least one chronic health condition and 60% of have at least two chronic health conditions. Elders face significant challenges in paying for care and navigating complex health care systems; and

WHEREAS, the rising costs of housing, general goods and service, and property taxes also disproportionately affect older people. Over 90% of elders rely on a fixed income that does not increase at the same rate as expenses, resulting in higher levels of poverty; and

WHEREAS, for marginalized people, barriers like these limit access to a variety of resources, such as higher wages, credit, housing, healthcare, education and public services. The lack of opportunity for improvement compounds long-standing inequities in these areas and contributes to unjust outcomes; and

WHEREAS, Missoula County and our partners are committed to further identifying and addressing these barriers, including those that may impact access to local government; and

WHEREAS, all residents benefit when these barriers are removed; and

WHEREAS, Missoula County is a partner with the City of Missoula, which is a member of the National League of Cities' 2021 Cities of Opportunity Action Cohort. This program endeavors to help local leaders address holistic, interconnected factors that affect life expectancy and help build resilient futures for all residents; and

WHEREAS, Missoula County, the City of Missoula, Missoula City-County Health Department, Partnership Health Center, All Nations Health Center, Missoula County Public Schools and the University of Montana will work together and with other trusted partners to better align our equity efforts; and

WHEREAS, Missoula County, through our Invest Health initiatives and many others, is in alignment with the Cities of Opportunity cohort and our local partners in committing to the health and social and economic well-being of all residents. Missoula County will foster community engagement to leverage resources and implement new strategies to prioritize investments for improving health and well-being for all -- particularly those with the greatest needs in our community; and

WHEREAS, implementing proven equity practices and policies will help Missoula County meet its goals in terms of health outcomes and other disparities. These disparities lead to a decrease in quality of life for marginalized communities.

WHEREAS, Missoula County will strive to ensure equal opportunities for all people, especially those diverse populations who are often marginalized. Missoula County will consider equity when making changes to County policy; and

WHEREAS, an equity approach ensures all residents have the opportunity to grow, contribute and develop to their fullest potential; and

WHEREAS, vibrant communities employ strategies grounded in justice, equity, diversity and inclusion to ensure everyone has fair and just access to the resources necessary for health, and social and economic well-being; and

WHEREAS, Missoula County seeks to better incorporate the concepts of justice important to the original Indigenous inhabitants of the County. These include an obligation to care for the lands, waters, plants and animals; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners created and filled the position of equity coordinator to take a critical look at both our internal organizational behavior and externally to our equitable delivery of services and then to recommend strategies for improvement; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Missoula Board of County Commissioners is committed to a Just, Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive (JEDI) Missoula County. Missoula County will pursue initiatives, efforts, strategies and partnerships that advance a more just, equitable, diverse and inclusive Missoula, free of systemic and structural inequalities. (See Exhibit A for shared definitions for JEDI.)

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners will support this commitment by facilitating and supporting the efforts of our many trusted partners. Working collaboratively with our local JEDI cohort to create a shared roadmap to equity, we recognize that we improve faster by working together; leading efforts to create a JEDI Advisory Board; and calling upon all residents to engage in this critically important work.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of County Commissioners will prioritize advancing these efforts, based on information learned to date to develop a Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan. This plan will include:

- Developing strategies for reviewing and revising our policies, procedures, initiatives and public engagement plans to better reflect justice, equity, diversity and inclusion to ensure equitable delivery of Missoula County services.
- Identifying and building upon existing JEDI-related systems, goals and strategies within Missoula County.
- Prioritizing efforts to ensure Missoula County intentionally reflects diversity in the communities it represents by fostering justice, equity, diversity and inclusion on our community councils, numerous boards and commissions, and in our hiring practices.
- Establishing tools to identify JEDI benchmarks and progress, including assessments to measure JEDI knowledge for County leadership, employees, commissions, boards, community councils and the Board of County Commissioners.
- Establishing community engagement tools, including a JEDI Advisory Board and community meetings, to advance efforts, engage and connect community with resources, and align our JEDI efforts with community partners' efforts.

DATED THIS 2ND DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2021

ATTEST:

Tyler Gernant

Tyler Gernant, Clerk and Recorder



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
MISSOULA COUNTY

David Strohmaier

David Strohmaier, Chair

Josh Slotnick

Josh Slotnick, Commissioner

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Juanita Vero, Commissioner

Exhibit A

JEDI Definitions: National League of Cities, Cities of Opportunity cohort and City-County Equity Workgroup

Justice: Dismantling barriers to resources and opportunities in society so all individuals and communities can live a full and dignified life. These barriers are essentially the “isms” in society: racism, classism, sexism, etc. – *Public Lands Alliance*

Equity: Full and equal access to opportunities, power and resources so all people achieve their full potential and thrive. – *Developed by King County*

Diversity: Being composed of a demographic mix of an intentional collection of people, taking into account elements of difference across national origins, languages, ethnicities, races, skin colors, cultures, ages, generations, religions, spiritualities, socio-economic backgrounds, gender identities and sexual orientations, as well as different skills, abilities, customs, values, behavioral styles, beliefs and where these identities intersect. – *Adapted from D5 Coalition and Michigan Nonprofit Association/NEW Center's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Toolkit*

Inclusion: The full engagement of individuals sharing power at all levels of an organization. All members are valued, respected and supported. The act of inclusion is reflected in an organization's culture, practices and relationships that support a diverse workforce and is an intentional demonstration that counters the historical exclusion of underrepresented communities. Inclusive organizations ensure equal and full participation in decision-making processes by considering all views. While a truly “inclusive” group is necessarily diverse, a “diverse” group may or may not be “inclusive.” – *D5 Coalition and Michigan Nonprofit Association/NEW Center's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Toolkit*

¹ Urban Indian Health Institute, Seattle Indian Health Board, 2017, *Community Health Profile: Individual Site Report, Missoula Urban Indian Health Program Service Area*. Seattle, WA: Urban Indian Health Institute; Russette, H., January 5, 2016, *2015 Health Equity Report: Missoula City-County Health Department*, p. 3-13

²City of Missoula, Montana 2019-2023 Consolidated Plan for HUD Funded Programs for Federal Fiscal Years 2019-2023NA-15 Disproportionately Greater Need: Housing Problems – 91.205 (b) (2)

³Missoula County Monthly Jail Population Dashboard, June 2020 to July 2021