



July 20, 2020

Via Electronic Mail Only (Lamar.Joyner@buncombecounty.org)

Buncombe County Board of Commissioners
Attention: Lamar Joyner, Clerk to the Board
200 College Street, Suite 300
Asheville, NC 28801

RE: Buncombe County Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP) Letter of Support

Dear Buncombe County Board of Commissioners:

As a member of the CHIP Advisory Council, Vaya Health joins with our CHIP partners to call upon the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners (BOC) to issue a proclamation declaring racism as a public health crisis in Buncombe County. As the BOC is aware, the Buncombe County Health and Human Services (HHS) Board unanimously passed a proclamation on June 26, 2020 that asserts this and describes action steps the HHS Board will take to advance racial equity and justice in Buncombe County. Vaya supports this proclamation and further supports the larger efforts of the American Public Health Association to name racism as a public health crisis across the nation because racism harms people's physical and mental health.

As a local management entity/ managed care organization responsible for managing publicly-funded mental health, intellectual/ developmental disabilities and substance use recovery services in a 22-county region that includes Buncombe County, Vaya is acutely aware of the interconnected ways societies foster racial discrimination in health care and related social determinants (including but not limited to housing), and how this discrimination leads to inequities in health opportunities, conditions, and outcomes.

Vaya supports communities across the country and all over the world that are coming together as a movement seeking meaningful action to address the experiences of Black, Indigenous, People of Color and other groups (including the LGBTQ community and persons with disabilities) that have suffered from discrimination. We are aware that COVID-19 has amplified existing health inequities, exacerbating the avoidable disparities in health conditions, opportunities and outcomes between community members and groups because of the cumulative stressors, trauma, and unequal treatment caused by racism and other forms of discrimination. Vaya has already begun to take concrete steps to address health disparities within the populations we serve.

At Vaya, we recognize the need to collaboratively address systemic racism in order to advance the health and wellbeing of our entire community. As community leaders, our integrity will determine the stand we take today, tomorrow and the future. **We ask that you, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners, use your leadership in our community to officially name racism as a public health**

crisis in Buncombe County. In turn, we commit to working with County Manager Avril Pinder, Assistant County Manager Dakisha Wesley (a member of the Vaya Health Board of Directors) and our CHIP partners to ensure that Vaya Health fully supports, through its actions, decisions, policies and funding priorities, community efforts toward dismantling racism and building a more equitable and just society for all.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Ingraham', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brian Ingraham, MSW, Chief Executive Officer

Rhonda Cox, HSP-PA, Chief Population Health Officer and CHIP Advisory Council Member

Tracy Hayes, JD, CHC, General Counsel and Chief Compliance Officer

Larry Hill, Chief Financial Officer

Craig Martin, M.D., F.A.P.A., Chief Medical Officer

Robert Webb, Chief Information Officer

cc: CHIP Advisory Council members via Zo.Mpofu@buncombecounty.org
Rick French, Vaya Health Board Chair
Vaya Health Diversity & Inclusion Committee