



ANTI-BLACK RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

June 8, 2020

Dear Members of the Toronto Board of Health

First of all, it will be important to acknowledge the efforts and strategic decisions that the Board of Health has taken in recent times to address health inequities and injustices in our great city but more so as it relates to the Black Torontonians.

I, personally, would like to acknowledge the resolution passed in the fall and the leadership shown by the Board of Health to acknowledge that Community Violence should be considered as a public health issues and hence requiring a Public Health Approach. It was a privilege to have deputized at that particular meeting.

As the leader of the organization and on behalf of the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers of TAIBU Community, we would like to thank you and we are very cognizant of the resolution that you have passed in December to participate in the Anti-Black Racism capacity building session under TAIBU's Black Governance & Leadership Project. We appreciate your commitment. We are looking forward to participating in a difficult, uncomfortable but vital discussion once the COVID-19 restriction is lifted.

In particular in this difficult period of time, this is clear and apparent; when we are witnessing the pain and suffering of a population and its fight against Anti-Black Racism. I would like to re-affirm the benefits of such relationship and engagement with the subject matter and stakeholders. But at the same time, I would also like to point out to you, as members holding of one of most the critical Governance and Leadership space, how much more important it is to have the voice of the suppressed, oppressed and marginalized communities in the City – the Black voice represented at the Board.

Again, the Board of Health / Toronto Public Health has shown leadership in addressing Anti-Black Racism by responding swiftly to the call for race-based data collection during COVID-19 to be able to understand the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the Black and other racialized communities.

However, my message today is to ask to you to continue to engage with Anti-Black Racism. This is a systemic, deep seated and long established injustice and will not go away and dissipate because of (as important as they are) a few resolutions and actions. Even COVID-19 is

demonstrating that it will stay with us for a while and its impact will require considerable investment and long term plan. It is and even more significant with Anti-Black Racism and its effects.

I ask you to continue to work with key stakeholders (e.g. the Black Health Leaders) in developing a long term and strategic plan - a 10-year strategy and plan to address Anti-Black Racism in our public health systems. What we are witnessing through media; the death of members of the Black communities is not even the tip of the iceberg! People are dying due to disproportionate chronic conditions (diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, mental list ... the list of examples is too long to name all here). The challenge is further rendered complex because of the interplay of the other social determinants of health (poverty, unemployment, living conditions etc...).

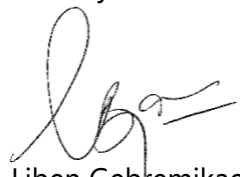
The Black communities are ready to engage and to bring about change. We have been ready for a very long time. We have been calling for change in different ways including protests. We just need the system to show willingness to engage. We are waiting for the systems and institutions to respond to the cries and screams of the community. We have no choice but for change to take place.

WE CAN'T BREATHE! WE ARE DYING!

WE ARE TORONTONIANS. WE ARE A PROUD AND RESILIENT POPULATION. WE DESERVE BETTER. WE DESERVE MUCH BETTER.

IT CAN BE BETTER.....

Thank you

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liben Gebremikael', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Liben Gebremikael
Executive Director

VISION, MISSION, VALUES STATEMENTS

Statement of Purpose:

TAIBU Community Health Centre is at the forefront of the delivery of community health and social services to Black communities across the Greater Toronto Area. Our work aims to improve, promote and protect the health and well-being for Black populations through quality and culturally designed primary health care services and strategies.

Vision:

Achieving and maintaining health through community development, knowledge exchange, empowerment and the elimination of systemic racism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination in healthcare

Mission:

TAIBU Community Health Centre provides primary health care and related services for Black populations across the Greater Toronto Area as its priority population and residents of the local community of Malvern. Recognizing that systemic oppression has fostered conditions of ill-health with Black communities, we strive to deliver these services through intersectional, equity based and culturally affirming practices which promote holistic wellness, health education, and prevention.

Values:

- **Leadership** – Leadership of Black communities is essential to provide sustained and equitable access to high quality primary health care services.
- **Community Driven** – We strive to be transparent and accountable to the communities we serve
- **Africentricity** – We recognize the rights of people of African descent to strive for self determination
- **Quality** – Our programs and services are evidence informed and reflect a high standard of quality