



30 May 2023

## **Re: Deputation in Support of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism – Year Four Update**

Dear Members of the Economic and Community Development Committee,

The Pamoja Institute for Community Engagement and Action strongly supports the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit in the ongoing implementation of the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. We ask that Committee Members support the unanimous adoption of the Toronto Action Plan Year Four Update.

At The Pamoja Institute, our mission is to confront Anti Black Racism and provide the tools and support necessary for the Black community to improve their health and well-being. We envision a future where racial equity is the norm and structural racism is dismantled. Our values are engagement, self-determination, and equity, and we strive to empower our community to participate in decision-making and self-determination. We believe that by working together, we can create a better future for all.

Pamoja's post-pandemic initiatives are anchored in food to combat the significant impact of food insecurity on early childhood development and adult well-being. Our efforts are aimed at addressing the alarming statistics from the City of Toronto's Black Food Sovereignty Plan, which reveals that 36.6% of Black children live in households where food is scarce. By focusing on food security and early childhood development, we aim to create solutions that positively impact the lives of Black children and communities. Research has shown that children who have experienced or are experiencing food insecurity early on in life are at higher risk of developing poor behavioural conduct, insecure attachment, and struggles with school. Additionally, they may have poor emotional skills and increased anxiety. Our strengths-based, community-centred approach will create a brighter future for Black children and families.

We wish to emphasize the critical efforts underway to foster the healthy growth and development of Black children during their early years. The Children's Services Innovation Grant initiative, which emerged from the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism, has provided a pivotal opportunity for Black-mandated organizations to collaborate with EarlyOn providers to launch culturally safe, targeted and responsive programming for Black parents, caregivers and children aged zero to six. The Pamoja Institute is at the forefront of this ground-breaking initiative, working in collaboration with EarlyON providers in Scarborough and Regent Park to implement innovative programming that lays the groundwork for Black children, parents, and communities to flourish. This visionary approach promises to make a profound difference in the lives of Black children and families, and we are thrilled to see such transformative work being carried out in our communities.

The EarlyON Innovation Grant: Reimagining Early Years Programming for Black Children and Families is a significant step towards addressing Anti-Black Racism and its ongoing manifestations. This endeavour has only been possible due to the remarkable leadership of the Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit, the Partnership, and Accountability Circle, as well as its partners who have been advocating for a comprehensive, community-informed approach to realize meaningful change. Targeted programs such as this are essential to address the pervasive impact of Anti-Black Racism on our Black children. We urge the City to work towards sustainable funding to address these issues, provide capacity-building supports, and tackle challenges such as food insecurity and healthy childhood development. These challenges existed before the pandemic and will continue long after if the City of Toronto does not take targeted action to support local Black community leadership and address Anti-Black Racism. It is imperative that the City takes bold steps to tackle this issue and intervenes with sustained support to ensure that Black children and families receive the resources and care they need to thrive. The EarlyON Innovation Grant is a vital first step, but more must be done to address the root causes of Anti-Black Racism and create lasting change for our community.

We are pleased to express our wholehearted support for the ongoing investment in the Toronto Action Plan to Confront Anti-Black Racism. We eagerly anticipate witnessing the positive and necessary outcomes that this initiative will continue to deliver. We would like to extend our gratitude to the members of the Economic and Community Development Committee for thoughtfully considering our comments during this session.

Sincerely,

*Amanda Ottley*

Amanda Ottley, RN

Founder, The Pamoja Institute for Community Engagement and Action