

October 12, 2020

*Submitted via email to Binta Kanteh at Binta.Kanteh@house.mn*

Dear Chair Richardson, Chair Moran and Members of the House Select Committee on Racial Justice,

On behalf of Allina Health, thank you for your commitment to holding public hearings and bringing attention to racial justice issues. For our organization, the interlocking crises of a global pandemic, economic inequality and systemic racism have led us to an inflection point in how we seek to understand our role as a health care provider to facilitate change for those we are privileged to employ and serve across Minnesota and the region.

We are committed to eliminating racial disparities and inequities in care for all. We acknowledge this is a long term journey and as an institution we have much to learn. In response to our learning this far, here are some of the key initiatives we are implementing to facilitate change:

- Supporting our care teams and the cultural communities that we serve. We are working to address gaps in our spiritual care team and enhancing training and support for our ICU care teams to be able to better communicate with patients and family members in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way.
- Partnering with Hennepin County to provide our Change to Chill resiliency program. From October 1-December 31, 2020 Change to Chill will work with community representatives, mental health providers and youth to create culturally relevant material for Hennepin County secondary youth, school staff and parents/guardians, prioritizing black, indigenous and people of color as well as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersexual and asexual populations most impacted by COVID-19. Through translating existing tools, creating new content and holding virtual sessions with diverse audiences, Change to Chill aims to provide a healing space for students and their parents while also acknowledging the unique needs of different populations.
- Building on our efforts to address the role of bias in access to hospice care for our African-American patients. We're developing the capability and capacity of our organization to identify and address additional health disparities in collaboration with our patients and community members.
- Engaging our employees and leaders in building their personal skills and understanding of cultural competency by participating in courageous conversations. These topics have ranged from how to have respectful conversations about race, Black lives Matters and understanding health disparities. Our leaders are engaging in listening sessions with a focus on hearing from staff of color and getting feedback on key efforts within the organization to move conversation to action.
- Following months of conversations with organizations and community groups about how to deepen our commitment to a society in which the strength of our diversity is honored and celebrated, Allina Health led collaborative efforts to create guiding principles to end systemic racism for health care providers and stakeholders. The guiding principles (attached) have been signed by over 30 organizations and are designed to demonstrate to the communities we serve our commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.

Public policy is an impactful tool in dismantling systemic inequities and we are committed to working with the legislature to advocate for policies that will eliminate systemic racism and health inequities in our state. Thank you again for your commitment to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Penny Wheeler, MD  
CEO  
Allina Health