

5 February 2023

ATTN: HAMILTON CITY COUNCIL

RE: MOTION TO AMEND HAMILTON'S BOARD OF HEALTH – LETTER OF SUPPORT

I offer my staunch support for Councillor Kroetsch's motion to restructure Hamilton's Board of Health to include 6 members of Council, 6 members of community health professionals, and 1 education representative. As Dr. Ameil Joseph, Lyndon George, and Dr Madeleine Verhovsek called for in their open letter dated February 25, 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the profound racial health inequities that exist in Canada and this must be addressed through structural changes in leadership and governance.

As a family physician and racialized woman myself, I know far too well the obvious racial disparities in health outcomes for racialized patients, of the anxiety my family members and racialized patients face when entering the health care environment, and mistrust of a system designed by and for white Canadians. As a researcher, my work focuses on racial differentials in attainment, and the appropriate collection and interpretation of race-based data. We know that health care is far from race-neutral. Rather, our political and health structures have been, and continue to be, shaped by our Colonial history.

Addressing structural inequities necessitates structural changes. Hamilton's Board of Health cannot continue to be compromised solely of elected members of council. Health outcomes are the result of complex interactions between our physiology, health system, politics, and socioeconomic statuses. Navigating such complexities should be done with the valuable input of local health experts. Representation matters, and racialization impacts the political attainment and representation of people from racialized and other equity seeking-communities in elected positions. I hope that my City Council would extend their equity-lens in understanding the importance of representation - as improving access to health care and increasing trust in such a system cannot be done without being informed by the lived experiences of our community members.

Sincerely,



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