



June 5th, 2020

North Shore Community Health grew out of the civil rights and social justice movements of the 1960s. By their mission and mandate, community activists created community health centers to address systemic racial and ethnic health disparities hard coded into local/regional/national healthcare practices.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote: Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter. The Board and staff of North Shore Community Health have watched in sadness and rage the unfolding of the tragic events of the last week with a question top of mind – when will this end? How many murdered and maimed black and brown bodies will it take before we decide as a civilized society to address head on the issue of racism and how it plays out in our communities? How can we continue to live and do nothing when people are murdered in their own beds, jail cells, while jogging or walking down a street? When driving/shopping/walking/jogging/bird watching/sleeping while black or brown can result in senseless loss of life?

We know that many of our staff and patients live with this reality much more acutely than others and we encourage all to acknowledge it in their communities. Further, we encourage those who can to actively fight against racism whenever and wherever we see it. All of us are witness to the effects of racism in our work at NSCH and have a more clinical/polite term for it – social determinants of health. There is more recent discussion and attention on this because black and brown people are being infected with COVID19 and dying at highly disproportionate rates compared with white folks. Data on the demographics of COVID19 infection among our own patients bears this out: 57% of those who test positive are Latinx/Black. Our patients and some of our staff and Board members live with the micro and macro aggressions of racism on a daily basis and when poverty is added into the mix, there is a high price to pay in health outcomes.

We are so proud of the work we do to engage our patients in addressing health issues and in treating them the way we all want/deserve to be treated – respectfully. However, we can and will do more at NSCH to address inequity and racism. We stand in solidarity with those who are peacefully protesting and educating their communities on the need to address this stain on the moral fabric of our country and communities. We invite our communities and partners to join us.

Sincerely,

Jack Vondras, Board Chair

Margaret Brennan, President and CEO