



# Cheryl Brooks Sullivan

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## Franklin County Treasurer

SCR 14 to Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis and Promote Racism Equality – Testimony

Franklin County Treasurer Cheryl Brooks Sullivan

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

My name is Rosalia Stadler, and I serve as policy advisor to the Franklin County Treasurer. Thank you for having us here this morning to give proponent testimony on Senate Resolution 14 to declare racism a public health crisis and promote racial equality. It is the intent of our office to not only create a positive taxpayer experience for our residents, but also to help all residents stay in their homes- especially residents who have paid off their mortgages but are struggling to pay their property taxes. Ohio is among the top 10 states with the highest foreclosure rates. Within the state of Ohio, Franklin County has the highest rate of foreclosure with Warren County and Loraine County rounding out the top ten. The four common triggers of foreclosure are job loss, divorce, death of a family member, and, important to today's conversation, health crisis.

Our office's data shows that 80 % of individuals in Franklin County who lose their homes to foreclosure had their mortgages paid off, and simply were unable to afford their property taxes. Furthermore, the areas of Franklin County where the majority of these foreclosures are occurring are the same areas where we see high rates of concentrated poverty, crime, infant mortality, food insecurity, and domestic violence, and are also historically African American neighborhoods. In the city of Columbus, the predominantly African American neighborhood of Linden has the highest percentage of delinquent parcels and foreclosures at 17.6% compared to the suburbs of Franklin County, which generally have 0.7% of the county's delinquent parcels and foreclosures. For these reasons, the Franklin County Treasurer's Office supports declaring racism a public health crisis in the state of Ohio.

Racism is a public health crisis impacting not only an individual's physical health, but also her mental and economic health. Racism leads to disadvantages for individuals and communities causing disparate impacts in many areas, including criminal justice, education, employment, and housing. Health and race directly affect all of these areas, particularly housing. Toxic stress related to the worry of losing housing can lead to mental health and substance abuse issues, resulting in negative effects on children and parents' well-being (Bailey, 2020).

The data from the Franklin County Commissioner's Rise Together Blueprint for Reducing Poverty indicates that many struggling households in Franklin County are housing cost burdened – which means that families are spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing (Franklin County Commissioners, 2019). Families within this cost burden are living in



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highly concentrated areas of poverty which are predominately African American communities. The housing cost burden leads to residents having a disadvantage when accessing credit to obtain housing which increases foreclosures rates in predominately African American communities.

The Franklin County Commissioner's resolution declaring racism a public health crisis cites "that African Americans in Franklin County experience "dramatically higher" rates of unemployment, poverty and incarceration. They also are less likely than whites to own homes and far more likely to live in neighborhoods with low-performing schools" (Price, 2020). In general, high housing costs worsen the adversity that many low-income families face, forcing many to decide between paying housing costs and paying for food, medicine, transportation, and other essentials (Bailey, 2020).

Declaring racism, a public health crisis is only the first step. This declaration must lead to tangible change in our county, our communities, our state, and our country. Please consider passing Senate resolution 14 as a beginning to the tangible change. The citizens of the state of Ohio deserve better.



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### Resources:

Bailey, Peggy. 17 January 2020. Housing and Health Partners Can Work Together to Close the Housing Affordability Gap. <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/housing-and-health-partners-can-work-together-to-close-the-housing-affordability#:~:text=Housing%20and%20Health%20Status%20Are,lower%20participants%20health%20care%20costs.>

Franklin County Commissioners. June 2019. Rise Together: A Blueprint for Reducing Poverty in Franklin County. [https://commissioners.franklincountyohio.gov/COMM-website/media/Documents/FRANK-Report-1-10-Web-Ready-\(Large\)\\_1.pdf](https://commissioners.franklincountyohio.gov/COMM-website/media/Documents/FRANK-Report-1-10-Web-Ready-(Large)_1.pdf).

Price, Rita. 19 May 2020. Racism Declared a Public Health Crisis by Franklin County Commissioners. <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20200519/racism-declared-public-health-crisis-by-franklin-county-commissioners.>