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News Release

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Element Group Pursuing Equity in the County

One year ago today, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors declared racism a public health crisis and tasked the County Administrative Office with forming an Equity group that would represent the 11th element of the Countywide Vision.

Discussions that led to the declaration and equity group were inspired by the national conversation taking place in the wake of the May 2020 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. The group was to be comprised initially of Black community members who could review each element of the Countywide Vision with an equity focus. Eventually, the group will grow to include representatives from other county communities and include an equity focus for all people. The County Administrative Office worked with trusted members of the community to identify organizations well versed in racial equity work.

“The Equity Element Group was formed of influential and prolific members of the Black community who are working together to continue improving our communities,” said Curt Hagman, chairman of the Board of Supervisors. “We are looking forward to the recommendations they will make to help us close gaps in services and opportunities for Black residents and people of color who live and work in our county.”

Members of the Equity Element Group are:

- **Hardy Brown** – Black Voice News
- **Keynasia Buffong** – National Black Grads
- **Pastor Samuel Casey** – Churches Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE)
- **Willie Ellison** – Southern California Black Chamber of Commerce
- **George Lamb** – Faith Advisory Council for Community Transformation (FACCT)
- **Tammy Martin-Ryles** – Black Chamber of Commerce
- **Tremaine Mitchell** – Youth Action Project
- **Phyllis K. Morris-Green** – Reimagining Our Communities (ROC)
- **Bishop Kelvin Simmons** – Inland Empire Concerned African American Churches (IECAAC)
- **Deborah Smith- Gilbert** – IE National Council of Negro Women (IENCNW)
- **Terrance Stone** – Young Visionaries Youth Leadership Academy
- **Bill Thomas** – NAACP, High Desert Branch
- **Dina Walker** – BLU Educational Foundation
- **Reggie Webb** – Cooperative Economic Empowerment Movement (CEEM) and Westside Action Group (WAG)
- **Keith Willis** – 100 Black Men of the Inland Empire
- **Chache Wright** – NAACP

The Equity Element Group is tasked with determining where there may be racial disparities among our residents in the county, if campaigns and programs could be implemented to solve those issues, and identifying what initiatives are already underway within County government or in the county community that can be highlighted and supported.

“As a member of the Equity Group, I am proud to serve in partnership with the County of San Bernardino as we address the issue of racism being a health crisis by allowing opportunities for people of color to become stakeholders in housing, jobs and education,” said Deborah Smith-Gilbert, president of IE National Council of Negro Women. “I look forward to working within our collaborative groups to make change for our families, our communities and ourselves.”

“While June 23, 2020 might’ve been a historic moment for San Bernardino County and community, we refuse to let up and allow this process to become merely ceremonial,” said Pastor Samuel Casey, executive director of Churches Organized for Prophetic Engagement (COPE). “We have an opportunity to create and make lasting change that will live beyond us. We must continue to be bold, courageous, and daring; to not only acknowledge that racial inequities exist, but also do the hard work of remediating the generational trauma that has historically plagued us far too long!”

“San Bernardino County declaring racism a public health crisis and establishing an Equity Group is a step in the right direction,” said Willie Ellison, board member with the Southern California Black Chamber of Commerce and CEO of Sapphire Marketing, Inc. “The group includes a number of talented and serious individuals, so I expect nothing but a positive outcome from their combined efforts. The fight for equality and equity is a process. It won’t be accomplished overnight, but I feel this group will be diligent and steadfast with the work that needs to be done. I am honored to be associated with such an amazing group of people.”

“San Bernardino County’s resolution declaring racism a public health crisis was a bold reflection of a reality that has been too long ignored,” said Reggie Webb, chairman of the Cooperative Economic Empowerment Movement (CEEM) and representative of the Westside Action Group (WAG). “Generations of decisions adversely affecting underrepresented minorities have degraded both their quality of life and upward mobility while at the same time increasing success rates for the majority population. The Equity Element Group, of which I am a proud member, is tasked to offer actionable recommendations that reverse the effects of racism while uplifting all citizens of the County.”

“Our History + Our Culture = Our Values,” said George Lamb, president and CEO of Faith Advisory Council for Community Transformation (FACCT). “Values × Behavior produces Lifestyle. We have to re-engineer our Culture. The TRUST!”

“San Bernardino County's board resolution is an important first step towards achieving the vision of equity, which requires honesty in how systems have affected vulnerable communities and the courage to dismantle and rebuild these systems,” said Phyllis K. Morris-Green, chair of Reimagining Our Communities (ROC). “Enacting the vision will bring inclusivity and healing as we seek to create a new equitable future for our County residents.”

“I applaud the County of San Bernardino for being the first in the state to declare racism a public health crisis,” said Tremaine Mitchell of Youth Action Project. “The creation of the Equity Group demonstrates

the County's commitment to translating that declaration into actions that will help create communities where all can thrive.”

“This is an amazing opportunity that we as the community can help to shape the future of how racism is addressed, and I'm 100% invested in this process,” said Terrance Stone, CEO of Young Visionaries Youth Leadership Academy.

The group began initial meetings several months ago and discussed various topics such as achieving equity in health, homeownership, jobs and economic development, education, public safety, infrastructure, and civic engagement.

The Equity Element Group recently developed a request for proposal to identify an equity consultant to lead this important work. The equity consultant will work with the County Administrative team, the Equity Element Group, and county, city and community stakeholders to reach the objectives identified in the resolution.

In 2011, the Board of Supervisors and San Bernardino Council of Governments adopted the Countywide Vision, a roadmap for the future of the county with an emphasis on 10 elements, including public safety, education, jobs and the economy, wellness and housing. The Countywide Vision recognizes that each of these elements is interrelated and interdependent.

Element groups working to achieve the Countywide Vision have produced tangible results for the county community. They include the Vision2Read literacy campaign; the Vision2BActive wellness campaign; the Vision4Safety public safety campaign; and the Vision2Succeed campaign created by the jobs and economy element group.