



## **To the Allegheny County Board of Health and County Executive-Elect Transition Team Members:**

The Allegheny County Health Department is vitally important for ensuring and improving the health and well-being of the residents of Allegheny County. Like the factors that contribute to health outcomes, ACHD's work spans many issues – from food safety, to housing, to air quality, to chronic disease, and more. In a 2014 *Pittsburgh City Paper* interview with former ACHD Director Karen Hacker, Director Hacker identified race and geography as the two health disparities that concerned her the most.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 10 years later, geographical and racial inequities in exposure to health threats and in health outcomes persist across the many areas of ACHD's work. Achieving health equity is an urgent need.

At the same time, worsening effects of climate change present greater risks to everyone in Allegheny County, especially to our neighbors and children who are already overburdened and under-resourced. The new ACHD director has the opportunity to lead our county to a healthier, secure, and life-giving future by ensuring that people's well-being is at the heart of priority-setting and decision-making across county government and across the county itself. For this reason, the signed organizations, groups, and individuals of the Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh network assert several key attributes that the hiring committee should emphasize in the search for our next health director.

The ACHD Director should:

- **Possess a proven track record in public health and in implementing a *social determinants of health* approach.** Political, economic, environmental, social, and cultural factors, including infrastructure and the built environment, impact health outcomes and need to be centered in our county's public health strategy;
- **Demonstrate previous success in – and an ongoing commitment to – urgently identifying, prioritizing, and addressing health disparities in all their forms.** This includes disparities in terms of race, class, sex, gender, ethnicity, ability, age, and geography (among others). The health director should treat the disparities with the utmost urgency, especially those affecting Black women, frontline environmental justice communities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, English as a second language speakers, and others;
- **Possess experience successfully implementing policies and programs that address climate change to protect public health.** Worsening climate change presents a risk to the health and well-being of all of our residents in the form of increased heat stress, increased prevalence of

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<sup>1</sup> Zimmerman, Alex. (2014, June 18). On the Record: A conversation with Dr. Karen Hacker, Director of the Allegheny County Health Department. Pittsburgh City Paper.



insect-borne diseases, increased rainfall, and other impacts. The health director should strive to prevent climate change, to mitigate the impacts, and to strengthen the ability of county residents to deal with the impacts, especially those residents living in the most vulnerable communities;

- **Show evidence of – and an ongoing commitment to:**
  - **transparency, openness, accountability and public participation in budgeting and decision-making,**
  - **implementing data justice, the “collection, analysis, sharing, and use of data entirely in service of and with accountability to participants and their communities,”<sup>2</sup>**
  - **ensuring language accessibility and cultural humility as fundamental practices of public health,**
  - **building long-term, positively-transformational relationships with communities and being in service to them—especially those communities that continue to be overburdened and under-resourced.** An ideal director will commit to accessible and respectful public dialogue, including by ensuring technology and language accessibility. They will also honor and listen to the concerns and priorities of residents of communities that continue to be overburdened and under-resourced;
  
- **Demonstrate success in intra-government collaboration.** A social determinants of health focus requires that ACHD work collaboratively with the rest of county government, including the Department of Human Services, Department of Economic Development, Pittsburgh Regional Transit, and other public offices to achieve equitable health outcomes;
  
- **Demonstrate a commitment to prioritizing health, security, safety, and well-being over profit in addressing current and future challenges.**

Finally, because the work of ACHD touches so many parts of our lives, the signed organizations, groups, and individuals of the Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh network call for a public selection process in which stakeholder organizations covering multiple issue areas meaningfully participate in the selection of final candidates for the position, and that final candidates participate in a public forum with a question-and-answer session. As the director will be charged with ensuring the public health of our county, we respectfully request that the public be given an opportunity to participate in this selection process.

Sincerely,

**The Organizations, Groups, and Individuals of the Equitable and Just Greater Pittsburgh network signed below:**

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<sup>2</sup> Metropolitan Alliance of Connected Communities. (2023) Data Justice. Last Accessed: 17 May 2023. Available at: <https://macc-mn.org/WhatsNew/DataJustice.aspx>



1Hood



Age-Friendly Greater Pittsburgh



Alliance for Police Accountability \*



Bike Pittsburgh



Black Environmental Collective \*



Black Equity Coalition \*



Breathe Project \*



Cancer and Environment Network of Southwestern Pennsylvania



Casa San Jose \*



Community Justice Project



CREATE Lab \*



Focus on Renewal \*



Group Against Smog and Pollution



Hill District Consensus Group \*



Hugh Lane Wellness Foundation



Just Harvest



Landforce



Larimer Consensus Group \*

\* denotes an EJGP Advisory Group Member



New Sun Rising



PennEnvironment



PennFuture



Physicians for Social  
Responsibility  
Pennsylvania



Pittsburgh Black  
Worker Center \*



Pittsburgh Food Policy  
Council \*



Pittsburghers for Public  
Transit \*



Take Action Advocacy  
Group \*



The Global  
Switchboard \*



Three Rivers  
Waterkeeper



Trying Together \*



UrbanKind Institute \*



West End P.O.W.E.R. \*



Women for a Healthy  
Environment \*

\* denotes an EJGP Advisory Group Member



Individuals:

Monica L Baskin, PhD

Dina Blackwell \*

Maegan Bogetti

Alexis Boytim

Joe Callahan

Kenna Campbell

Chavaysha Chaney

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