

CUYAHOGA COUNTY
BOARD OF HEALTH
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STATEMENT FROM THE CCBH BOARD MEMBERS

August 4, 2020

Upon learning of the incident involving our health commissioner appearing in blackface makeup many years ago, we felt it was incumbent upon us to prepare a response.

This situation is an unfortunate reminder of the lack of awareness and understanding that has served to perpetuate the stereotypes of African Americans and people of color in our society.

The concept of cultural appropriation, while new to many people over the past several years, has existed for centuries and is a tool used to demean and diminish the experiences of those affected.

In terms of Commissioner Allan's involvement, we fully appreciate how the actions of a young person can be inappropriate and regrettable. We also understand that through education and experience, a person can change for the better.

We feel that Commissioner Allan's leadership and work history related to community health, infant mortality, lead poisoning prevention, COVID-19 and a host of other issues illustrate his compassion and dedication to people of all races and ethnicities.

Under his tenure, we have seen the introduction of our agency's first African-American and Asian board members, the advancement of an agencywide Diversity Committee, and both staff and board participation in several equity-based workshops and training opportunities.

As board members, it is our job to provide oversight and offer guidance to the Board of Health staff. In terms of equity, diversity and inclusion, we have been proud of the work we have done to incorporate these beliefs into our agency's everyday portfolio, including service delivery, policy development and hiring practices.

Commissioner Allan has been a receptive and dynamic leader as we have fortified these areas and we are confident that his intentions are true and his spirit is genuine.

It has been said that all men make mistakes, but only wise men learn from their mistakes.

It is our feeling that Commissioner Allan has developed a sincere appreciation and sense of regret for the realities of his decades-old actions. It is also our position that he is fully capable of continuing to lead our agency during this time of pandemic and beyond.

Respectfully,

The board members representing the Cuyahoga County Board of Health