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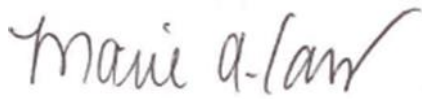
## **STATEMENT BY LIVE WELL ERIE CO-CHAIRS REGARDING COVID-19**

Health and community leaders from all levels have become more vocal in recognizing a glaring reality: the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates long-standing, preexisting health inequities in our community. We, the leaders of Live Well Erie recognize that, as with many health disparities, the impact of COVID-19 is seen and felt disproportionately in minority communities in Erie County. For example, African Americans are more susceptible to the most serious outcomes of COVID-19 because systemic racism and poverty make them more likely to suffer from chronic disease. Additionally, African Americans and other minorities serve on the front lines of the essential workforce as health care workers, nursing assistants, food service workers, grocery store clerks, childcare providers, sanitation workers and other related positions. Live Well Erie recognizes that these essential workers literally put their lives on the line to serve as the engine and back bone of Erie County's COVID response and need additional support to withstand the crisis.

People with chronic diseases including heart disease, asthma and diabetes are at high risk for serious disease from COVID-19. African American residents of Erie County have nearly five times the rate of asthma compared to White residents, a 50% higher rate of hospitalizations for heart disease, and a 250% higher rate of hospitalization for diabetes compared to Whites. These high rates of chronic disease are driven in large part by the social determinants of health. These determinants are the conditions under which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. Based on research we know that good health is not simply determined by individual health choices and behaviors, but rather is largely determined by economic opportunity, community supports, quality of schooling, workplace safety, stable housing, environmental quality, and other social interactions.

Live Well Erie, a strategic initiative launched by Erie County in September 2019 to ensure no one is left out of Erie County's resurgence, has specifically targeted these social determinants of health, and we have specifically adopted a value of viewing these social determinants through the lens of racial equity. Live Well Erie and our partners will, therefore, continue our focus on improving the social determinants of health as a significant way to eliminate the disparate impact that COVID-19 is having on minority communities. The Live Well Erie Task Force and its respective work groups on Children, Working Families, and Older Adults, will continue to foster and implement community strategies that target affordable housing, transportation, quality education, financial stability, linkages to health care, and other factors that contribute to large scale disparate health outcomes, including disparate COVID-19 outcomes.

COVID-19 does not discriminate. No member of our community, regardless of race, gender, or income, is immune from the disease. Some members of our community find themselves dealing with a *double pandemic*; the current COVID-19 crisis and the long-standing crisis of health and wellness disparities that have ravaged minority communities for years. Live Well Erie and our partners will continue to do everything at our disposal to improve the social determinants of health and arm every person with the tools he or she needs to fight COVID-19 and live well.



Marie A. Cannon  
Live Well Erie Co-Chair



John D. Craik  
Live Well Erie Co-Chair

For more information on Live Well Erie or to become involved, please visit [www.livewellerie.com](http://www.livewellerie.com). For more information on Erie County's response to COVID-19, please visit <https://www2.erie.gov/health/coronavirus>.