From: Karissa Keen
To: Public Comments
Date: Monday, July 20, 2020 4:02:26 PM

Hi, my name is Karissa Keen and I am a resident of Asheville.

I am writing today about a local, community health crisis. The County Health Board acknowledges that racism is a public health crisis. Now that the diagnosis is official, we need you to effectively address the local pandemic and to fund reparations for our Black, Brown, and Indigenous neighbors. Instead of opening hotel occupancy, there should have been a more thoughtful plan of action to address the needs of marginalized communities. Covid-19 is causing exponential harm by killing our neighbors, family, and friends or leaving them with organ damage to last a lifetime. Our city is being ravaged and unnamable harm is being done to OUR COMMUNITIES as you sit around and watch the tourists flock in from South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Florida, and Alamaba. The lack of community responsibility and care is outrageous.
As a citizen I am demanding commissioners amend their budget and defund the County Sheriff's Office and Detention Center by at least 50% immediately. Please reinvest funds taken from the sheriff and jail in ways that effectively address the local pandemic. This plan should include an end to the reopening. Only essential businesses should be open, with a requirement that businesses provide all workers with protective gear and that the mask policy is upheld. **All city and county schools must choose Plan C, and refuse to return to in person learning**. The county must provide accessible, free testing for all who need it, free masks available for everyone who doesn't have one, and funds for increased pay and support for frontline medical and emergency workers. We must address overtourism, and that means the County must shut down all leisure travel and abolish the TDA and its advertising. The County must open hotels for the unhoused community to prioritize their health and wellbeing. The Buncombe County sheriff must also halt enforcing evictions during the COVID pandemic. Durham County's sheriff has made this commitment. Buncombe's must too. And finally, the pandemic response MUST direct funds towards communities hardest hit and most at risk, especially immigrant communities.

The pandemic management must center the needs of communities of color. Going forward, the County MUST invest in the economic wellbeing of Black, Brown, and Indigenous residents, commit resources to eliminate the racial opportunity gap, and provide deeply affordable housing, land provisions, mental health services, rent subsidies and eviction diversion, free public transportation, and restorative justice services for all. And we mean ALL.
Thank you for your time, I urge you to act justly.

Karissa Keen