

COUNTY OF OTTAWA

STATE OF MICHIGAN

**RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH “WHERE FREEDOM RINGS” AS NEW COUNTY VISION STATEMENT**

At a regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the County of Ottawa, Michigan, held at the Fillmore Street Complex in the Township of Olive, Michigan on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of January, 2023 at 8:30 a.m. local time.

PRESENT: Commissioners: Gretchen Cosby, Douglas Zylstra, Allison Miedema, Rebekah Curran, Lucy Ebel, Roger Belknap, Sylvia Rhodea, Joe Moss

ABSENT: Commissioners: Jacob Bonnema, Kyle Terpstra, Roger Bergman

It was moved by Commissioner Sylvia Rhodea and supported by Commissioner Roger Belknap that the following Resolution be adopted:

WHEREAS, the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners swore an oath to uphold the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Michigan, which protect the rights to life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, and preserve the right of parents to determine the care of their children. The Constitutions also guarantee freedom of religion, speech, and assembly, as well as due process of law; and,

WHEREAS, constitutional freedoms are not to be suspended in times of crisis; and,

WHEREAS, the people of Ottawa County overwhelmingly spoke with their vote to restore the constitutional rights of the people as a first priority of the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners; and,

WHEREAS, “Where Freedom Rings”— where individual freedom, parental rights, and religious and conscience freedom are protected, all people belong; and,

WHEREAS, America is an exceptional nation made up of a diverse and beautiful people. America is the land of systemic opportunity, built on the Constitution, Christianity, and Capitalism— the opportunity that jobs provide for social uplift. We need to return our nation to our roots which made America exceptional, rather than apologize for them; and,

WHEREAS, diversity and inclusion, as traditionally defined, are beautiful words and bring value and richness to our relationships, homes, and communities. We value all people regardless of their ethnicity, sexuality, religion, gender and age, born or unborn; and,

WHEREAS, we agree with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream that children “will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.” We agree with his desire to “let freedom ring” in every city and state across our nation, and with the historical significance of these words to the American people’s struggle for freedom and equality; and,

WHEREAS, we believe in the American value of equality, which provides equal opportunity to all and rewards personal effort. Equality is a human right outlined in the Declaration of Independence, which guarantees our unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and,

WHEREAS, we believe in teaching America's true history, including difficult subjects, and agree with 1776 Unites, which affirms, "It is essential that children learn they are agents of their own uplift, knowing their possibilities, responsibilities, and what it means to be an American."; and,

WHEREAS, "A vision statement indicates how an organization views its ideal, or ultimate, goal"; and,

WHEREAS, Ottawa County's current vision statement of "Where You Belong" was used to establish the DE&I (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) Department on the premise that county resident characteristics of being 90% white and largely conservative were problematic for businesses; and,

WHEREAS, the vision statement of "Where You Belong" has been used to promote the divisive, Marxist ideology of the Race Equity movement in coordination with Race Forward's GARE ("Government Alliance on Race and Equity") to the employees and people of Ottawa County, including the promotion of GARE membership to local government bodies in townships and cities; and,

WHEREAS, Race Forward and GARE promote the tenants of the Race Equity movement and Critical Race Theory, which divide people by race as oppressed or oppressors based on skin color, asserting the theory of intersectionality, which teaches oppressor traits include being white, Christian, male, heterosexual, and cisgender; and,

WHEREAS, many Ottawa County job listings include a DE&I statement and that "Applicants whose work can align with this value are encouraged to apply", implying agreement with the DE&I Department is a condition of county employment; and,

WHEREAS, Race Equity teachings seek to replace the American value of equality with the socialist value of equity. Equity promises equal outcomes and is not a human right. Equity ignores the impact of personal effort while dismantling the foundations of our society which made our nation exceptional. Equity jeopardizes liberty; and,

WHEREAS, the Race Equity teachings promote a worldview which divides people according to perceived forms of oppression, and are a Marxist tool aimed at reducing personal agency, deconstructing American institutions, and promoting socialism and/or communism; and,

WHEREAS, we love the people and children of our county. We oppose teachings that divide, and that teach people to hate America and doubt the goodness of her people. We oppose promotion of Race Equity teachings through government policy, employee training, and government schools; and,

WHEREAS, we seek to restore Ottawa County to its first responsibility of protecting the constitutional rights of its people, and need a vision statement which reflects Ottawa County's "ideal, or ultimate, goal"; and,

WHEREAS, we affirm "Where Freedom Rings"— where individual freedoms, parental rights, and freedom of religion and conscience are protected, all people belong; and,

WHEREAS, we welcome all to live, work, worship and raise a family in Ottawa County;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners establishes a new county vision statement and motto of "Where Freedom Rings"; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all county use of the prior vision statement of "Where You Belong" be discontinued at the earliest possible date; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all resolutions and parts of resolutions insofar as they conflict with this Resolution are hereby repealed.

YEAS: Commissioners: Gretchen Cosby, Allison Miedema, Rebekah Curran, Lucy Ebel, Roger Belknap, Sylvia Rhodea, Joe Moss

NAYS: Commissioners: Douglas Zylstra

ABSTENTIONS: Commissioners: None

RESOLUTION ADOPTED.



Joe Moss, Chairperson  
Ottawa County Board of Commissioners



Justin F. Roebuck  
Ottawa County Clerk/Register of Deeds