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**TO:** Honorable City Council

**FROM:** David Whitaker, Director  
Legislative Policy Division 

**DATE:** March 3, 2025

**SUBJECT: RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE CLIMATE DISASTER RECOVERY TASKFORCE**

Pursuant to the request of Council Member Latisha Johnson, the Legislative Policy Division has attached a resolution establishing the Climate Disaster Recovery Taskforce for your approval.

Please contact our office should you have any questions or concerns.

**BY COUNCIL MEMBER LATISHA JOHNSON**

**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE CLIMATE AND DISASTER RECOVERY TASK FORCE**

- WHEREAS** The impact of climate-related disasters is often intensified in urban environments due to the complex interplay of infrastructure systems, increasing population density, cultural dynamics, and economic activities, placing cities at heightened risk; and <sup>1</sup>
- WHEREAS** Racially and socioeconomically marginalized communities disproportionately bear the impacts of climate change, experiencing greater harm from storms, flood events, extreme heat, and the increasing prevalence of climate-related infectious diseases, further exacerbating existing health and economic disparities; and <sup>2</sup>
- WHEREAS** When floods occur, low-income urban communities suffer severe economic and health consequences, including damage to homes, loss of livelihoods, and increased exposure to injuries, further deepening social and economic disparities; and <sup>3</sup>
- WHEREAS** with the majority of the world’s population currently residing in urban areas—and projections indicating continued urban growth—cities must prioritize the development of robust strategies to enhance resilience and effectively respond to climate-related disasters, including heat waves, floods, and droughts; and
- WHEREAS** The City of Detroit is vulnerable to climate-induced disasters, including flooding, and other severe weather phenomena, all of which have a disproportionately negative effect on historically marginalized communities; and<sup>4</sup>
- WHEREAS** The senior population in Detroit faces heightened exposure to climate-related disasters due to age-related health concerns, limited mobility, and fixed incomes, which can restrict their ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from extreme weather events; and
- WHEREAS** Older adults are disproportionately affected by extreme temperatures, power outages, and disruptions in essential services, increasing their risk of heat-related illnesses, respiratory conditions, and social isolation during climate emergencies; and
- WHEREAS** Black and Brown populations have a higher risk of disaster vulnerability, exposing them to suffer from greater economic hardship, delayed recovery, and reduced access to federal aid, exacerbating existing social and economic inequities; and
- WHEREAS** Cities play a critical role in disaster risk reduction, with the integration of climate change adaptation and disaster preparedness being essential to building resilience; and
- WHEREAS** Federal disaster relief programs have historically provided inferior funding and delayed assistance to Black and Brown communities, exacerbating economic and racial inequities in post-disaster recovery; and

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<sup>1</sup> Ebru Gencer et al., Disasters and Risk in Cities, in *Climate Change and Cities: Second Assessment Report of the Urban Climate Change Research Network* 61, 61–98 (Cynthia Rosenzweig et al. eds., Cambridge Univ. Press 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Alique G. Berberian, David J. X. Gonzalez & Lara J. Cushing, Racial Disparities in Climate Change-Related Health Effects in the United States, *Current Environ. Health Reps.* 451 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-022-00360-w>.

<sup>3</sup> Michelle S. Escobar Carías, David W. Johnston, Rachel Knott & Rohan Sweeney, Flood Disasters and Health Among the Urban Poor, 31 *Health Econ.* 2072 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1002/hec.4566>.

<sup>4</sup> NAACP, *Natural Disasters Impacts on Black People* (2023), <https://naacp.org/resources/natural-disasters-impacts-black-people>.

**WHEREAS** Implementing climate-resilient policies and infrastructure at the local level is crucial to mitigating the effects of extreme weather events and ensuring equitable disaster preparedness for all Detroit residents; **NOW THEREFORE BE IT**

**RESOLVED** That the Detroit City Council hereby establishes the Climate and Disaster Recovery Task Force to develop policies and programs aimed at enhancing climate resilience and disaster preparedness; to secure equitable disaster relief; and to advance resilient infrastructure and climate adaptation strategies that prioritize the safety of all Detroit residents, with an appropriate emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable communities; and

**RESOLVED** That the Detroit City Council further establishes the Climate and Disaster Recovery Task Force effective immediately and continuing until December 31, 2025; **BE IT FURTHER**

**RESOLVED** That the Climate and Disaster Recovery Task Force will be co-chaired by Council Member Latisha Johnson, Council Member Gabriela Santiago Romero, and Council Member Mary Waters. The task force may also include staff from relevant city departments such as the Office of Sustainability, Detroit Homeland Security & Emergency Management, Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, and the Detroit Health Department; representatives from county, state, and federal agencies including FEMA, the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE), and the Wayne County Office of Emergency Management; community-based organizations focused on climate resilience and environmental justice; academic institutions with expertise in climate science, public health and urban planning; and representatives from impacted neighborhoods; **NOW BE IT FINALLY**

**RESOLVED** That the Climate and Disaster Recovery Task Force will focus on improving the availability of disaster recovery resources, ensuring equitable distribution of relief funds, and eliminating racial disparities in disaster response and recovery efforts.