National Public Health Week Proclamation

WHEREAS, the week of April 6, 2026, is National Public Health Week, and the theme is "Ready. Set. Action!" highlighting public health actions and the improvement of the health of all Americans, including the important efforts led locally by Burke County Public Health.

WHEREAS, significant strides have been made in public health since the inception of National Public Health Week in 1994, including the following public health successes:

1. childhood mortality, which was at a rate of 13.8 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1994, has now fallen to 5.4 deaths per 1,000 live births due to vaccines, better health care access, and nutrition; and

2. smoking rates, which were as high as 25.5% among U.S. adults in 1994, have now fallen to 11.4 % due to comprehensive smoke-free policies, public awareness campaigns, and taxation of tobacco products; and

3. deaths due to HIV/AIDS, which peaked in 1994 at 49,095 AIDS-related deaths that year in the U.S., have dropped significantly with Antiretroviral therapy ensuring most people with HIV can live normal lifespans, and prevention tools like PrEP significantly reduce transmission; and

4. mental health awareness and treatment, with 40% of people with mental health conditions being untreated in 1994, has progressed with increased awareness, parity laws, and integration into primary care, which have expanded access to mental health services and reduced treatment gaps; and

5. lead poisoning, with 4.4% of U.S. children having elevated blood lead levels in 1994, has now fallen to less than 0.5% due to policies banning leaded gasoline and reducing lead in paint, pipes, and water systems; and

WHEREAS, a person's health status can differ drastically by ZIP code due to differences in the built environment, environmental quality, community context, access to healthy food, access to education, and access to health care.

WHEREAS, public health organizations use National Public Health Week to educate public policymakers, public health professionals, and the public on issues that are important to improving the health of the people of the United States;

WHEREAS, public health professionals help communities prevent, prepare for, withstand, and recover from the impact of a full range of health threats, ranging from infectious disease outbreaks to natural disaster preparedness; and

WHEREAS, efforts to adequately support public health and the prevention of disease and injury can continue to transform a health system focused on treating illness into a health system focused on preventing disease and injury and promoting wellness.

NOW, THEREFORE, WE, THE BURKE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS, hereby proclaim the week of April 6-12, 2026, as National Public Health Week in Burke County and call upon the people of Burke County to observe this week by helping our families, friends, neighbors, co-workers and leaders to recognize the contribution of scientists, local, city and state legislators, community activists, including public health workers in (1) adopting initiatives that have significantly improved the health and longevity of the people of our state and (2) encouraging continual vigilance to promote health and well-being for all citizens, as the theme states, "Ready. Set. Action!"

Approved this 20th day of April 2026.

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Jeffrey C. Brittain, Chairman
Burke Co. Board of Commissioners