

Pamela Pugh, DrPH, MS

Dr. Pamela Pugh has over twenty-four years of experience in the field of public health with emphasis on achieving health equity through environmental justice. An advocate of the “whole child” approach to education, Dr. Pugh is passionate about fostering the education and wellness of children through systems and programs that involve the physical, social and emotional aspects of their development. Her research includes development of an assessment tool to identify household, neighborhood and psycho-social factors that pose the greatest environmental health risk to children and their families.

She currently serves as the Executive Vice President of Special Project Development for The Chisholm Legacy Project: A Resource Hub for Black Frontline Climate Justice Leadership. She is the co-founder of Regeneration LLC, a consultancy that serves as a catalyst for economic sustainability and healthy urban communities. Pamela received both a Doctor of Public Health and Master of Science from the University of Michigan School of Public Health a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from Florida A&M University, and an Associates Degree in Pre-Engineering from Delta College.

FIGHTING ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE

Recognizing that environmental health is a social justice issue, Pamela served as the Chief Public Health Advisor for the City of Flint from October 2016 to November 2019, where she worked alongside Flint Mayor Dr. Karen Williams Weaver to implement a “Health Equity in All Policy” approach to decision-making during the Flint Water Crisis.

While working for fourteen years within a local public health department, Dr. Pugh worked to forge effective partnerships with community, faith and community-based organizations, academia, policy makers and local and state government to secure millions in funding to address environmental health/health equity related issues. She is also noted for being at the forefront of the fight to end childhood lead poisoning in Michigan and was instrumental in reducing elevated blood lead levels in Saginaw children.

Dr. Pugh, with Michigan State Conference NAACP, Black Lives Matter Michigan, One Love Global and other civil rights leaders, social justice activists, public health and public policy leaders, lead the charge to get racism declared a public health crisis in Michigan. The move is focused on addressing institutional racism and inequities in everything from housing to government policies that lower life expectancies among African Americans.

ADDRESSING EDUCATIONAL INEQUITY

In 2014, she was elected to an eight-year term on the Michigan State Board of Education and currently serves as the board’s vice president. She also serves as a member of the Healthy Schools Network Board of Directors and a member of the Board of Directors for the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE). In each of these roles, Dr. Pugh is able to

draw critical and urgent attention to the linkages between academic outcomes and children's health; advocate for policy and programs that involve the physical, social and emotional aspects of child development; and push for resources to improve the environments in which children and their families live, learn, work, and play. Dr. Pugh's academic research includes development of an assessment tool to identify household, neighborhood and psycho-social factors that pose the greatest environmental health risk to children.

Pamela stands firm in her role of being an outspoken voice for Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) children. Pamela initiated a program now led by the University of Michigan to address the high obesity rate and lack of access to physical activity for the state's 1.5 million schoolchildren, especially in BIPOC communities, during the pandemic with the launch of the InPACT at Home initiative. The program offers free, online workouts developed by physical education teachers.

As Michigan schools have grappled with keeping students in "in-person" learning amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, Dr. Pugh has persistently sought out solutions to exposure risks related to building infrastructure and exacerbated by long-standing disparities in underfunded communities. She has remained vigilant and very vocal in her push for policy makers to better assess and urgently address these challenges.

Dr. Pugh also took a stand in a historic Detroit Right to Literacy lawsuit filed by Detroit schoolchildren. Though named as a defendant in the case in her capacity as a member of the State Board of Education, she sided with the seven minority student plaintiffs while lawyers from the State asked the federal appeals court to throw out the lawsuit. She was also involved in thwarting efforts to marginalize civil rights, social justice, labor union, and LGBTQ+ movements in history in Michigan's K-12 social studies curriculum standards. Most recently, she has been a leading voice in opposition to efforts to censor curriculum and/or intimidate Michigan's K-12 educators in order to prevent the teaching of accurate U.S. history particularly related to slavery, institutional racism, and the lingering consequences of both.

COMMUNITY ADVANCEMENT THROUGH POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

Passionate about fostering the involvement of young adults and women in the political process, Dr. Pugh is the former 2nd Vice President of the National Federation of Democratic Women and is the immediate past chair of the Michigan Democratic Women's Caucus. She organized Women's Issues Conferences for the Federation's Midwest Region in 2015 and for the Michigan Caucus in 2018. She also co-chaired the first Climate, Energy and Environment Roundtable at the 2016 Democratic National Convention. Pamela has served as a pledged delegate for several conventions, including the 2016 DNC.

Dr. Pamela Pugh has been recognized nationally by the NAACP as a two-time recipient of the Dr. Montague Cobb Award for special achievement in social justice, health justice, health education and promotion, fund-raising, and research. She is a proud graduate of Saginaw High School, a member of World Outreach Campus Church of God in Christ, under the leadership of Hurley Coleman, Jr., and a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.