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Kent County Hires First Chief Inclusion Officer

Appointee brings over 20 years of local government leadership and public health experience to the job

(Grand Rapids, Mich. – May 6, 2021) – Kent County has selected Teresa Branson as its first Chief Inclusion Officer. This position will report to the Kent County Administrator, underscoring the organization’s commitment to fully embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in its strategic priorities. She starts her new position May 24.

“We are fortunate to have someone as qualified as Teresa serve as our first Chief Inclusion Officer,” said Kent County Administrator Wayman Britt. “We elevated this role because we are committed to accelerating our efforts to be an inclusive workforce and to ensure we are being equitable in our service delivery. I am excited for Teresa to fulfill this role and help us expand our diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.”

Branson currently serves as the Deputy Administrative Health Officer for the Kent County Health Department (KCHD). Prior to that, she held numerous public health education positions within KCHD, Child & Family Services of West MI, Inc., and Arbor Circle Corporation.

She brings extensive experience implementing strategic diversity and inclusion programs and processes. During her tenure at KCHD, she provided direction for the department’s health equity initiatives and led several successful programs aimed at reducing health disparities. She has also facilitated health equity and social justice training sessions. Branson serves on numerous community and statewide boards, including the Michigan Community Action Team of the Governor’s COVID-19 Racial Disparities Task Force.

“It is an honor to be selected as the first person filling this role at Kent County,” said Branson. “I look forward to working with our leadership teams, employees and community partners to build on the work that has already been done and to implement meaningful change that will make County government more responsive in meeting the diverse needs of our employees and community.”

“Inclusive Participation” was one of five strategic priorities identified in the [County’s 2019 strategic plan](#). Over the past several years, the board and administration have invested in programs to increase equity and inclusion in hiring, training and service delivery. Branson will oversee all the County’s diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and identify ways to improve the County’s ability to serve its employees and residents.

“Teresa has a wealth of experience that will help us develop best practices and break through potential barriers. Our goal is to build a more welcoming workforce and community,” concluded Britt.

Branson holds a Master of Health Administration from Grand Valley State University and a Bachelor of Science in Public Health Education from Central Michigan University.