
SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

ASSERTING THAT RACISM IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS AND URGING THE STATE TO COMMIT TO RECOGNIZING AND ADDRESSING THE RESULTING INEQUITIES, AND STUDY AND REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE ON ECONOMIC DISPARITIES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE DETRIMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH EFFECTS OF RACISM.

1 WHEREAS, public health is defined by the World Health
2 Organization as "the art and science of preventing disease,
3 prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized
4 efforts of society"; and

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6 WHEREAS, racism is a social system with many dimensions
7 that act on systemic, institutional, and interpersonal levels;
8 and

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10 WHEREAS, structural racism has resulted in race functioning
11 as a social determinant of health, with persistent racial
12 disparities in areas such as health care, criminal justice,
13 housing, education, employment, worker protections, climate,
14 food access, and technology; and

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16 WHEREAS, systemic racism resulting from the inherent biases
17 and prejudices within social and political organizations,
18 groups, and institutions continues to create barriers to success
19 for people of color; and

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21 WHEREAS, racism intersects with other forms of prejudice
22 and oppression that increase adverse outcomes, including
23 discrimination based on immigration status, gender and sexual
24 identity, and mental and physical abilities; and

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26 WHEREAS, the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic
27 has revealed, reaffirmed, and cast in sharp relief the exigent
28 nature of these pre-existing inequities caused by systemic
29 racism; and



1
2 WHEREAS, the John A. Burns School of Medicine (JABSOM)
3 reported in May 2020 that the highest rates of positive COVID-19
4 cases in several states, including Hawaii, were among native
5 Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) groups; and
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7 WHEREAS, according to Keawe'aimoku Kaholokula, professor and
8 Chairperson of JABSOM's Department of Native Hawaiian Health,
9 the higher risk of infection among NHPI communities is linked to
10 pre-existing and underlying inequities in the social
11 determinants of public health across racial and ethnic groups
12 that are ubiquitous in the United States; and
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14 WHEREAS, shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic began to
15 heavily affect Hawaii, the Aloha United Way (AUW) issued a
16 report on Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE)
17 households, finding that forty-two percent of Hawaii's 455,138
18 households struggle to make ends meet and while nine percent of
19 these households were living beneath the Federal Poverty Level
20 (FPL), another thirty-three percent were ALICE households that
21 earned above the FPL, but not enough to afford basic household
22 necessities; and
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24 WHEREAS, in January 2020, Hawaii's unemployment rate was
25 the lowest in the country at two percent, hit a historic state
26 high of 21.9 percent in May 2020, and as of January 2021 was the
27 highest in the country at 10.2 percent; and
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29 WHEREAS, research has shown that economic disparities
30 contribute to a public health crisis, including higher rates of
31 illness, injury, disability, and death for people living in
32 poverty that results in a substantially shorter life expectancy
33 compared to affluent people; now, therefore,
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35 BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first
36 Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, the
37 House of Representatives concurring, that this body asserts that
38 racism is a public health crisis affecting our entire State and
39 that the State is urged to commit to:
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- 41 (1) Eliminating racial disparities in the criminal justice
42 system;



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- 2 (2) Prioritizing racial equity in decision making
- 3 processes;
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- 5 (3) Acknowledging that communities of color have borne the
- 6 greatest burdens of inequitable social, environmental,
- 7 technological, economic, and criminal justice
- 8 policies, practices, and investments;
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- 10 (4) Understanding that the legacy of inequitable policies
- 11 has caused deep disparities, harm, and mistrust; and
- 12
- 13 (5) Recognizing that racial equity is realized only when
- 14 race can no longer be used to predict life outcomes;
- 15 and
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17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body asserts that economic
 18 disparities have contributed to a public health crisis in the
 19 State; and

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 21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State, its departments and
 22 agencies, and the counties are urged to commit to engage as
 23 partners with communities and residents most impacted by
 24 systemic racism and to identify and implement solutions; and

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 26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State, its departments and
 27 agencies, and the counties are urged to prioritize diversity in
 28 board membership, centering voices of people of color when
 29 addressing issues of racism, and holding one another accountable
 30 to address implicit biases of all kinds; and

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 32 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the State, its departments and
 33 agencies, and the counties are urged to promote equity through
 34 all policies approved by the Legislature and enhance educational
 35 efforts throughout the state system aimed at understanding,
 36 addressing, and dismantling racism and how it affects the
 37 delivery of human and social services, economic development, and
 38 public safety; and

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 40 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Director of Health, in
 41 conjunction with the Directors of Human Services and community
 42 organizations, is requested to:



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- 2 (1) Identify the twenty communities with the largest
- 3 number of ALICE households in the State, as listed in
- 4 the AUW ALICE Data Sheet, 2020;
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- 6 (2) Provide a summary of all activities conducted by their
- 7 departments to provide health care services in these
- 8 communities;
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- 10 (3) Develop a plan of action to reduce the number of ALICE
- 11 households in the State; and
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- 13 (4) Transmit a report of findings and recommendations to
- 14 the Legislature no less than forty days before the
- 15 convening of the Regular Session of 2022; and
- 16

17 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this
18 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor, Director
19 of the Department of Health, Dean of the John A. Burns School of
20 Medicine, Chairperson of the John A. Burns School of Medicine
21 Department of Native Hawaiian Health, Executive Director of
22 Aloha United Way, and Chief Executive Officer of the Hawaii
23 Primary Care Association.

