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# HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.

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, the World Health Organization identifies the right  
7 to health, defined as the enjoyment of the highest attainable  
8 standard of health, as a fundamental human right, which must be  
9 enjoyed without discrimination on the grounds of race, age,  
10 ethnicity, or any other status; and

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12           WHEREAS, racism's influence on public health has been  
13 recognized by the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease  
14 Control and Prevention, Department of Health, Judiciary, Hawai'i  
15 State Commission on the Status of Women, Papa Ola Lōkahi, 'Ahahui  
16 o Nā Kauka, American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i, and many  
17 others; and

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19           WHEREAS, racism is the belief, theory, or doctrine that a  
20 certain race of people is inherently superior to people from  
21 other racial groups, race is therefore a fundamental determinant  
22 of human traits and capacities, and racial differences produce  
23 an inherent superiority of a particular race; and

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25           WHEREAS, racism influences classism which creates  
26 categories of people who are deemed "less worthy", and therefore  
27 available to be exploited for the sake of profit and power and  
28 race is a construct and part of the system of oppression which  
29 maintains class hierarchy through an accelerated wealth and  
30 health divide; and

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1 WHEREAS, racism is a fundamental component of economic  
2 exploitation that disproportionately negatively affects a  
3 certain demographic of the population; and  
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5 WHEREAS, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities  
6 that have suffered the most historically due to structural,  
7 distributional, and procedural racism are also  
8 disproportionately overrepresented on the frontlines of the  
9 coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, chronic diseases,  
10 houselessness, housing and food insecurity, incarceration, and  
11 the climate change crisis; and  
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13 WHEREAS, "frontline communities" are typically defined as  
14 communities that are disproportionately exposed and vulnerable  
15 to health threats, climate-based disruptions, and economic  
16 dislocation and that have fewer resources, capacity, safety  
17 nets, or political agency to respond to and withstand those  
18 risks; and  
19

20 WHEREAS, frontline communities often include low-income  
21 communities; immigrant and refugee communities including those  
22 with undocumented immigrants; Native Hawaiian, Compact of Free  
23 Association (more commonly referred to as "COFA"), and other  
24 Pacific Islander communities; communities of color; people with  
25 disabilities; people experiencing houselessness or housing  
26 insecurity; the LGBTQ community; as well as women, keiki,  
27 kupuna, and anyone at the intersection of these identities; and  
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29 WHEREAS, climate change is the outcome of the degradation  
30 and destruction of natural ecosystems, subsistence lifestyles  
31 and ancestral practices due to extractive, violent, infinite  
32 economic growth that originates from the exploitation of land  
33 and labor directly connected to the disproportionate  
34 distribution of wealth accumulation for a small percentage and  
35 certain demographic of the population, mostly white, cis gender  
36 men; and  
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38 WHEREAS, historic and current examples of environmental and  
39 economic racism include colonialism, slavery, plantations, the  
40 fossil fuel industry, deforestation, industrial agriculture,  
41 gentrification, and mass tourism; and  
42



1 WHEREAS, racial profiling is the implicit and explicit act  
2 of selecting or targeting a certain race or races for law  
3 enforcement encounters, policies, and practices; and  
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5 WHEREAS, Native Hawaiian, Black, and other Pacific Islander  
6 residents are disproportionately the subject of police force;  
7 and  
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9 WHEREAS, though our entire island community has been  
10 negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline  
11 communities that face preexisting socioeconomic and health  
12 inequities are arguably the most severely harmed by the  
13 pandemic; and  
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15 WHEREAS, the John A. Burns School of Medicine reported in  
16 May of 2020 that the highest rates of positive COVID-19 cases in  
17 several states, including Hawaii, were among Native Hawaiian and  
18 Pacific Islander groups; and  
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20 WHEREAS, in May 2020, the Hawaii Journal of Health and  
21 Social Welfare stated that Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander  
22 communities have experienced disproportionately high rates of  
23 COVID-19 and members of these communities are dying at higher  
24 rates than their white counterparts across the nation due to  
25 structural inequities in access to health care and economic  
26 security; and  
27

28 WHEREAS, in recognition of the historical injustices and  
29 ongoing inequities faced by Native Hawaiians, the Hawai'i State  
30 Constitution and Hawai'i Revised Statutes memorializes provisions  
31 that aim at restoring justice for Native Hawaiians; and  
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33 WHEREAS, the Black Lives Matter and related movements have  
34 recently highlighted how individual, institutional, structural,  
35 and systemic racism continue to shape our social, economic, and  
36 political structures, including through the disproportionate  
37 health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic upon  
38 frontline communities; and  
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40 WHEREAS, to best accomplish the Hawai'i State Planning Act's  
41 objective of the "elimination of health disparities by  
42 identifying and addressing social determinants of health",



1 institutionalized racism and racist policies must be dismantled;  
2 now, therefore,  
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4 BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the  
5 Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawai'i, Regular Session  
6 of 2021, the Senate concurring, that this body declares racism  
7 as a public health crisis; and  
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9 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body recognizes the  
10 importance of operationalizing antiracist practices and policies  
11 through educational opportunities, training, and continued  
12 learning with national networks of government working to achieve  
13 racial equity and advance opportunities for all such as the  
14 Government Alliance on Race and Equity; and  
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16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body is committed to  
17 understanding and addressing systemic racism, and is dedicated  
18 to collective efforts to dismantle all forms of racism at all  
19 levels and its impacts on the delivery and implementation of  
20 human and social services, economic development, health care,  
21 and public safety; and need to adopt a Hawai'i-based, culturally-  
22 based, health justice framework that will further combat the  
23 continuation of racism with policy making while also promoting  
24 racial equity; and  
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26 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body recognizes the  
27 importance of educational opportunities, training, and continued  
28 learning aimed at understanding and addressing systemic racism,  
29 and of the need for our collective effort to dismantle all forms  
30 of racism at all levels and its impacts on the delivery and  
31 implementation of human and social services, economic  
32 development, health care, and public safety; and  
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34 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body urges the Governor to  
35 also declare racism a public health crisis and direct the  
36 departments to assess how systemic racism exists in the  
37 departments' policies, programs, and services, and to take all  
38 steps necessary to address racism in promoting racial equity;  
39 and  
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41 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this  
42 Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor and  
43 directors or chairs of all departments.

