

ASSEMBLY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION No. 172

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: AUGUST 24, 2020

The Assembly Community Development and Affairs Committee reports favorably and with committee amendments Assembly Joint Resolution No. 172.

As amended, this joint resolution establishes a task force to study racial bias within the State's criminal justice system. Racial bias, which refers to prejudice in favor of or against a racial or ethnic group when compared to another racial or ethnic group, is present within each major component of the United States criminal justice system including law enforcement, courts, and corrections. Racial bias occurs both explicitly and implicitly within the criminal justice system, and racial bias contributes to the disparate treatment of minority individuals within the criminal justice system. Implicit biases, which are often subconscious, unknown prejudices and stereotypes, surface at times where criminal justice system actors exercise widespread discretion. These implicit biases can have various adverse outcomes among minority individuals who are experiencing the criminal justice system specifically among African Americans.

Research has shown that African Americans experience racial bias and disparate treatment within each of the major components of the criminal justice system including law enforcement, courts, and corrections. One of the main places to witness the result of racial biases is within the prison population, which is severely overrepresented by minority individuals.

This task force shall consist of 17 members with representation from the General Assembly, the Senate, the Attorney General, the Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, the Administrative Director of the Courts, the President of the New Jersey Prosecutors Association, the Executive Director of the Juvenile Justice Commission, the Commissioner of Corrections, the Public Defender, and communities and community-based advocacy groups that reflect the diverse composition of the State. The task force shall study the presence and prevalence of racial bias within the State's criminal justice system. The task force shall examine current data, research, and policies related to racial bias and racial disparities within the State's law enforcement, courts, and correctional system, identify

effective strategies to reduce the presence of racial bias within the criminal justice system, and develop recommendations to implement those strategies. Within a year after the organization of the task force, the task force shall submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature of the task force's findings and recommendations.

COMMITTEE AMENDMENTS:

The committee amendments replace the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court with the Administrative Director of the Courts for purposes of representation on the task force.