

ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION No. 175

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JULY 16, 2020

Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman ANGELA V. MCKNIGHT

District 31 (Hudson)

Assemblywoman VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Co-Sponsored by:

Assemblywoman Jasey

SYNOPSIS

Declares racism a public health crisis in New Jersey.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 12/20/2021)

1 **AN ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION** declaring racism a public health crisis
2 in the State of New Jersey.
3
4 **WHEREAS**, The United States has historically and systemically
5 disadvantaged racial, ethnic, and religious groups across the
6 country, creating deep-seated problems that persist today, more
7 than 150 years after slavery ended, and 50 years after the civil
8 rights movement; and
9 **WHEREAS**, It is widely understood that structural racism manifests in
10 differential access by race to opportunities, resources, conditions,
11 and power within the country’s medical and public health systems;
12 and
13 **WHEREAS**, Black people contend with disproportionately high death
14 rates for chronic health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, and
15 cancer; and
16 **WHEREAS**, Heart disease is the leading cause of death for black
17 women and according to the American Medical Association Journal
18 of Ethics, this is largely due to race-related stress, barriers to care,
19 and racism from health care provider; and
20 **WHEREAS**, Black women die from pregnancy and childbirth at three to
21 four times the rate of white women, and black children are more
22 than twice as likely to have asthma as white children; and
23 **WHEREAS**, These systemic racial health disparities have myriad
24 causes, such as lack of health insurance, failures of the medical
25 system, and inadequate access to health care; and
26 **WHEREAS**, Black people are five times more likely than whites to be
27 killed by police shootings while unarmed; and
28 **WHEREAS**, Excessive police force and verbal altercations between law
29 enforcement officers and the public is a communal violence,
30 particularly among black and brown communities where these
31 incidents are more prevalent and pervasive, that significantly drives
32 unnecessary and costly injury and death; and
33 **WHEREAS**, Systemic racism as a driver of health inequity is also
34 particularly evident in findings from a 2018 study showing that law
35 enforcement-involved deaths of unarmed black individuals were
36 associated with adverse mental health among black American
37 adults—a spillover effect on the population, regardless of whether
38 the individual affected had a personal relationship with the victim
39 or the incident was experienced vicariously; and
40 **WHEREAS**, The trauma of violence in a person’s life course is
41 associated with chronic stress, higher rates of comorbidities, and
42 lower life expectancy, all of which bear extensive care and
43 economic burden on healthcare systems while sapping the strength
44 of affected families and communities; and
45 **WHEREAS**, Sustained exposure to racism in all of its forms is a critical
46 determinant of health because it increases stress hormones, such as
47 cortisol, which impacts the physical, emotional, and mental well-
48 being of those who experience racism each and every day; and

1 **WHEREAS**, Studies have shown that implicit biases and internalized
2 racism has led to black and brown people having less access to
3 health care, preventive care, and quality education, and suffering
4 from higher incarceration rates and increased mortality rates; and

5 **WHEREAS**, In New Jersey, one of the wealthiest states in America, the
6 median net worth for white families is \$352,000, the highest net
7 wealth in America. The median net worth for New Jersey's black
8 families is just \$6,100; and

9 **WHEREAS**, Black people in New Jersey are three times more likely to
10 face the use of force by a police officer than white people; and

11 **WHEREAS**, In 2016, the United. States Department of Justice found
12 that 75 percent of all police stops in the city of Newark were
13 unconstitutional, and over 20 percent of police stops involved
14 excessive use of force; and

15 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey maintains a public school system in which
16 nearly half of the State's black, Latina, and Latino students attend
17 schools that are at least 90 percent non-white; and

18 **WHEREAS**, In New Jersey, a black child is 21 times more likely than a
19 white child to be sentenced to prison– the highest youth
20 incarceration disparity in America, even though black and white
21 children commit most offenses at similar rates; and

22 **WHEREAS**, The American Medical Association, the American
23 Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the
24 American College of Physicians, and the American Public Health
25 Association have all formally declared that, along with the
26 coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), racism is a public health
27 issue, and called upon the Centers for Disease Control and
28 Prevention and other leading health organizations to study the
29 public health effects of racism, physical and verbal violence
30 between law enforcement officers and black and brown
31 communities, and the health, economic, education, and legal
32 disparities rooted in a history of unequal treatment in racially
33 marginalized communities; and

34 **WHEREAS**, The foregoing findings demonstrate the prevalence of
35 systemic racism, racism's role as a driver of health inequity, and the
36 detrimental effects that racism has on the citizens of the State of
37 New Jersey and this county; now, therefore,

38
39 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the General Assembly of the State of New*
40 *Jersey:*

41
42 1. This House declares racism as a public health crisis in the
43 State of New Jersey.

44
45 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
46 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the
47 Commissioner of Health and the Attorney General.

1 STATEMENT

2

3 This resolution declares racism a public health crisis in the State
4 of New Jersey. It is widely understood that systemic racism is a
5 driver of health inequity and is manifested in differential access by
6 race to opportunities, resources, conditions, and power within the
7 medical and public health systems.

8 Black people contend with disproportionately high death rates
9 for chronic health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, and
10 cancer, and these racial health disparities have myriad causes such
11 as lack of health insurance, failures of the medical system, and
12 inadequate access to health care.

13 Physical or verbal violence between law enforcement officers
14 and the public is a communal violence, particularly among black
15 and brown communities where these incidents are more prevalent
16 and pervasive, that significantly drives unnecessary and costly
17 injury and death. The trauma of violence in a person's life course is
18 also associated with chronic stress, higher rates of comorbidities
19 and lower life expectancy, all of which bear extensive care and
20 economic burden on healthcare systems while sapping the strength
21 of affected families and communities.

22 Studies have shown that implicit biases and internalized racism
23 has led to black and brown people having less access to health care,
24 preventive care, and quality education, and suffering from higher
25 incarceration and increased mortality rates throughout this country
26 and State.

27 The foregoing findings demonstrate the prevalence of systemic
28 racism, racism's role as a driver of health inequity, and the
29 detrimental effects that racism has on the citizens of the State of
30 New Jersey and this country.