

SENATE RESOLUTION No. 127

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 11, 2021

Sponsored by:

Senator RONALD L. RICE

District 28 (Essex)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senator Stack

SYNOPSIS

Declares racism a public health crisis in New Jersey.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 11/8/2021)

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1 **A SENATE RESOLUTION** declaring racism a public health crisis in
2 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

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

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

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

35
36 **BE IT RESOLVED** *by the Senate of the State of New Jersey:*

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38 1. This House declares racism as a public health crisis in the
39 State of New Jersey.

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41 2. Copies of this resolution, as filed with the Secretary of State,
42 shall be transmitted by the Clerk of the General Assembly to the
43 Commissioner of Health and the Attorney General.

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45

46 STATEMENT

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48 This resolution declares racism a public health crisis in the State
49 of New Jersey. It is widely understood that systemic racism is a

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1 driver of health inequity and is manifested in differential access by
2 race to opportunities, resources, conditions, and power within the
3 medical and public health systems.

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

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

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

23 The foregoing findings demonstrate the prevalence of systemic
24 racism, racism's role as a driver of health inequity, and the
25 detrimental effects that racism has on the citizens of the State of
26 New Jersey and this country.