

STATE OF NEW YORK

5679--A

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

February 23, 2021

Introduced by M. of A. DARLING -- read once and referred to the Committee on Governmental Operations -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to declare racism a public health crisis and to establish a working group to promote racial equity throughout the state

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Legislative findings and declarations. The legislature
2 hereby finds and declares that racism is a public health crisis that
3 poses a threat to the health, safety, and quality of life to as many as
4 forty-seven million Americans; and that racism negatively impacts and
5 exacerbates health inequities among historically marginalized communi-
6 ties. The legislature further finds and declares that racism contributes
7 to a national disparity between black and white infant mortality rates;
8 and that racism contributes to inequalities in housing, education, and
9 employment, and that racism negatively impacts the lives of people of
10 color in New York. The legislature further finds that race is a social
11 construct not rooted in meaningful biological differences, and this
12 system unfairly disadvantages specific individuals and communities,
13 while giving advantages to other individuals and communities. The
14 legislature further finds and declares that the impact of racism on
15 public health deserves action from all levels of government. Therefore,
16 this legislation establishes a working group to address issues related
17 to racism and ensure the health and safety of the citizens of the state.

18 § 2. There is hereby established within the department of health a
19 working group to be known as the "racial equity working group".

20 § 3. The working group shall study issues related to racism as a
21 public health crisis, and develop recommendations for legislative or
22 other actions that can be undertaken to reduce or eliminate racial and
23 ethnic disparities.

24 The work group shall study:

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 (a) methods for community engagement and tools for government agencies
2 to engage with communities of color regarding healthcare services;

3 (b) partnerships to eliminate racial or ethnic disparities in educa-
4 tion, employment, housing, and criminal justice;

5 (c) measures to promote racially equitable hiring and promotion of
6 employees, including in healthcare;

7 (d) support of local, state, regional, and federal initiatives that
8 advance efforts to reduce or eliminate racism;

9 (e) measures to expand understanding of racism and how racism affects
10 individual and population health;

11 (f) secure adequate resources to successfully accomplish the aforemen-
12 tioned activities; and

13 (g) social determinants of health and how they impact the health,
14 mental health, educational and career opportunities.

15 § 4. The working group shall consist of the following:

16 (a) the state commissioner of health and his or her designee;

17 (b) one member appointed by the state commissioner of health;

18 (c) two members appointed by the governor;

19 (d) one member appointed by the speaker of the assembly;

20 (e) one member appointed by the temporary president of the senate;

21 (f) one member appointed by the minority leader of the assembly; and

22 (g) one member appointed by the minority leader of the senate.

23 Members of the workgroup should be representative of disadvantaged
24 communities including those with limited access to healthcare services
25 and experts in minority health advocacy.

26 § 5. The members of the working group shall receive no compensation
27 for their services, but shall be eligible to receive reimbursement for
28 their reasonable, actual and necessary expenses, provided however,
29 members of the working group representing state agencies may receive
30 reimbursement for their actual and necessary expenses from their respec-
31 tive agencies.

32 § 6. The working group shall issue a report on its findings, includ-
33 ing any legislative recommendations to the governor, temporary president
34 of the senate, and speaker of the assembly by December 31, 2021, and
35 every two years thereafter.

36 § 7. For the purposes of this act, the commissioner of health may
37 conduct such study and report in conjunction with any other department,
38 division, board, bureau, commission, agency, or public authority of the
39 state he or she deems necessary. To the maximum extent feasible, the
40 commissioner of health shall be authorized to request, receive, and
41 utilize such resources and data of any other department, division,
42 board, bureau, commission, agency, or public authority of the state as
43 he or she may reasonably request to properly carry out his or her powers
44 and duties pursuant to this act.

45 § 8. This act shall take effect on the thirtieth day after it shall
46 have become a law.