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:

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

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

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

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

(b) partnerships to eliminate racial or ethnic disparities in education, employment, housing, and criminal justice;

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

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

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

(f) secure adequate resources to successfully accomplish the aforementioned activities; and

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

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

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

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

(c) two members appointed by the governor;

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

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

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

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

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

§ 5. The members of the working group shall receive no compensation for their services, but shall be eligible to receive reimbursement for their reasonable, actual and necessary expenses, provided however, members of the working group representing state agencies may receive reimbursement for their actual and necessary expenses from their respective agencies.

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

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

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