

STATE OF NEW YORK

5679

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

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 office of the state
19 commissioner of health a working group to be known as the "racial equity
20 working group".

21 § 3. The working group shall address the issues related to racism as a
22 public health crisis, and biennially, shall study and provide recommen-
23 dations for legislative or other actions that can be undertaken to
24 reduce or eliminate racial and ethnic disparities, including:

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

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1 (a) community engagement and tools for government agencies to engage
2 actively and authentically with communities of color;

3 (b) partnerships in the education, employment, housing, and criminal
4 justice arenas to reduce or eliminate racial or ethnic disparities ther-
5 ein;

6 (c) measures to promote racially equitable hiring and promotion of all
7 employees;

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

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

12 (f) secure adequate resources to successfully accomplish the aforemen-
13 tioned activities.

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

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

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

17 (c) two members appointed by the governor;

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

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

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

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

22 § 5. The members and staff personnel of the racial equity working
23 group shall serve without compensation, but shall be eligible to receive
24 reimbursement for their reasonable, actual and necessary expenses,
25 provided however, members of the working group representing state agen-
26 cies may receive reimbursement for their actual and necessary expenses
27 from their respective agencies.

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

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