

**JOINT RESOLUTION DECLARING RACISM A MORAL AND
PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

2021 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Sandra Hollins

Senate Sponsor: _____

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This joint resolution of the Legislature declares racism to be a moral and public health crisis and states the Legislature's commitment to address the crisis.

Highlighted Provisions:

This resolution:

- ▶ affirms that differences in access to opportunities and resources according to race persist;
- ▶ highlights racial disparities in health measures, including COVID-19 risks;
- ▶ describes calls by various organizations for racism to be addressed;
- ▶ declares racism to be a moral and public health crisis; and
- ▶ expresses the Legislature's commitment to:
 - identify and abolish state policies that are discriminatory; and
 - identify actions that may be taken by the state to help mitigate the impacts of any discriminatory policies of the past.

Special Clauses:

None

Be it resolved by the Legislature of the state of Utah:

WHEREAS, the United States has historically and systematically disadvantaged racial



28 and ethnic groups across the country, creating deep-seated problems that persist today, more
29 than 150 years after slavery ended, and 50 years after the civil rights movement;

30 WHEREAS, the American Anthropological Association asserts that genetic analyses
31 show race to be a social construct not rooted in meaningful biological difference;

32 WHEREAS, there is clear data that racism negatively impacts the lives of people of
33 color in Utah and in the United States, including through its effect on social determinants of
34 health;

35 WHEREAS, social determinants of health, which are the social and material factors that
36 influence health outcomes, have a lifelong impact beginning even before birth;

37 WHEREAS, the American Public Health Association clarifies that racism is a social
38 system with multiple dimensions, including individual racism that is internalized or
39 interpersonal, and systemic racism that is institutional or structural;

40 WHEREAS, the American Public Health Association has expressed that racism is a
41 driving force of the social determinants of health due to the resulting inequalities in a number
42 of matters, including housing, education, and employment;

43 WHEREAS, the trauma of violence in a person's life course is associated with chronic
44 stress, higher rates of comorbidities, and lower life expectancy, all of which bear extensive care
45 and economic burden on health care systems while sapping the strength of affected families
46 and communities;

47 WHEREAS, the American Psychological Association says that, because of poverty and
48 discrimination, racial minority children are more likely to experience traumatic events, and that
49 childhood trauma has negative impacts on academic, behavioral, and physical health outcomes;

50 WHEREAS, racism has become embedded over time into a system that structures
51 opportunity and assigns value based on the social interpretation of how one looks, including
52 systems that unfairly disadvantage specific individuals and communities while unfairly giving
53 advantages to other individuals and communities, and sapping the strength of the whole society
54 through the waste of human resources;

55 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected all Utahns but has also highlighted
56 the stark racial injustices that are still present in American society, including here in Utah,
57 where data from the Department of Health shows that:

58 (1) the Native American & Alaska Native community, which has the highest case

59 fatality and hospitalization rates for COVID-19 out of any racial or ethnic group in the state,
60 including a case fatality rate that is nearly three times the state average;

61 (2) the Black and African American community makes up 2.1% of the state's
62 population but accounts for only 1.3% of the total COVID-19 tests administered in the state;

63 (3) the Latino community, which accounts for 14.2% of the state's population, but 24%
64 of the state's COVID-19 cases;

65 (4) Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander community members, who represent 1.6% of
66 the population but 2.8% of the state's COVID-19 cases and have the highest mortality rate for
67 COVID-19 out of any racial or ethnic group in the state; and

68 (5) the Asian American community has been uniquely affected by the COVID-19
69 pandemic through a rise in xenophobic narratives, and aggregation of diverse ethnic groups
70 masks the effect of COVID-19 on specific ethnic communities;

71 WHEREAS, the One Utah Roadmap issued by Governor Cox and Lieutenant Governor
72 Henderson commits to:

73 (1) supporting the principles of the Utah Compact on Racial Equity, Diversity, and
74 Inclusion;

75 (2) identifying and investing in priority services and infrastructure needs that impact
76 social determinants of health;

77 (3) developing a statewide health equity plan charged with evaluating systemic changes
78 that address health disparities; and

79 (4) improving life outcomes for people with historically and systemically less access to
80 opportunity, including women, people of color, and LGBTQIA+ individuals;

81 WHEREAS, the Utah Compact on Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion has been
82 signed by Utahns from a range of experiences, sectors, backgrounds, political parties:

83 (1) affirming that all Utahns must have a truly equal opportunity to prosper, and that
84 systems of racism that have been internalized for centuries require bold anti-racist actions and
85 policies right now;

86 (2) recognizing that we must listen and learn from each other, realizing that as we
87 deepen our understanding of differences, we can, in turn, be better understood; and

88 (3) pledging to take steps on an individual, business, and government level that will
89 establish priorities and laws that create equal opportunity and access for all, and that will foster

90 a culture of inclusion in every aspect of our organizations and society while addressing social
91 injustice and inequality, and condemning all forms of prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination;

92 WHEREAS, the Utah Hospital Association, along with nearly every major hospital
93 system in the state, issued a statement on January 12, 2021, that racism is a public health crisis,
94 stating that racism is a threat to the health of Utah patients, families, and communities,
95 committing to addressing the public health crisis of racism, and describing the disparate impact
96 of COVID-19 on racial and ethnic minority communities in Utah;

97 WHEREAS, nearly every major association of health care professionals in this country
98 has formally declared that, along with COVID-19, racism is a public health crisis, calling upon
99 the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other leading health
100 organizations to study the public health effects of racism, physical and verbal violence between
101 law enforcement officers and black and brown communities, and the health, economic,
102 education, and legal disparities rooted in a history of unequal treatment in racially marginalized
103 communities; and

104 WHEREAS, Utahns across the state recognize the negative impact of racism on
105 families, friends, and members of our community:

106 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Utah, that
107 the Legislature declares that racism is a moral and public health crisis in the state.

108 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature affirms the principles of the Utah
109 Compact on Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

110 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature commits to working collaboratively
111 with the Governor and every sector of society to develop an ongoing strategy to address, fund,
112 and support solutions that strategically reduce the long-term impact that racism has on the
113 quality of life and health for citizens of color in the state.

114 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature intends to approach laws and
115 regulations with an antiracist, health-in-all policy equity-driven focus that asks whether policies
116 play a role in upholding or dismantling racist systems and to secure adequate resources to
117 address the public health crisis of racism.