

## Legislation Text

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Clerk 11/12/2020

A RESOLUTION encouraging the Washington state Legislature to address racism as a public health crisis including funding for Foundational Public Health Services and other vital policy strategies.

WHEREAS, racism is ingrained in our institutions, policies and practices and has harmful impacts that unfairly disadvantage Black, Indigenous and People of Color ("BIPOC") and unfairly advantages people who are perceived as white, and

WHEREAS, institutional racism creates differential access to opportunities and resources, and causes disparate outcomes across the social determinants of health including education, access to jobs, earning power, adequate and safe housing, higher rates of policing and involvement in the criminal legal system and overall quality of life, and

WHEREAS, decades of data collected by Public Health - Seattle & King County have demonstrated how BIPOC communities experience adverse health outcomes that are both acute, such as maternal and infant mortality and gun violence, and chronic, such as higher rates of cardiovascular disease and diabetes, maternal and infant mortality, underweight babies and shorter overall life expectancy, and

WHEREAS, BIPOC communities are experiencing disproportionate impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, including higher rates of infection, hospitalization and death, as well as economic impacts including job losses and limited opportunities for remote work, and

WHEREAS, on June 18, 2020, the Board of Health passed Resolution 20-08 declaring racism a public health crisis and committing to work to advance a public health approach in addressing institutional and

systemic racism, and

WHEREAS, in 2008 the King County executive joined with Public Health - Seattle & King County to launch the Equity and Social Justice Initiative, and later in 2010 the King County council passed equity and social justice ordinance, and now the current Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan leads with racial justice, and

WHEREAS, the public health system, in partnership with community partners, works to promote health and prevent the spread of disease, and

WHEREAS, creating a community where all residents have the opportunity to achieve good health and wellness requires an approach that takes into consideration the needs of all residents, but focuses particularly on the challenges experienced by the marginalized group, an approach called targeted universalism, and

WHEREAS, the Washington state Legislature has the opportunity to address racism as a public health crisis by investing in efforts that will focus on meeting the needs of residents historically and currently marginalized as a result of racism, and

WHEREAS, adequately funding Foundational Public Health Services is essential to addressing communicable disease outbreaks that often disproportionately impact communities of color as demonstrated by COVID-19, and

WHEREAS, public health's ability to address social and community conditions can improve physical and mental health, life expectancy and quality of life, while also reducing related health care costs and productivity losses, and

WHEREAS, over 600,000 people are uninsured in our state because insurance is unaffordable or because they are ineligible for public programs, and

WHEREAS, 28 percent of Hispanic/Latinx and 11 percent of Black county residents lacked health coverage in 2019 compared to 5 percent of white residents, and

WHEREAS, in 2018, 54 percent of Black King County residents and 45 percent of American

Indian/Alaska Native King County resident experienced housing cost burden, meaning they spent more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs compared, to 31 percent of whites, and

WHEREAS, injuries and deaths from firearms cause disproportionate harm in many communities of color in King County, and

WHEREAS, 74 percent of shooting victims in the first three quarters of 2020 were people of color, and the highest rates of King County residents' deaths from firearm-related injuries from 2013 through 2017 were among American Indian/Alaska Native and Black communities, many members of which have been affected by historical trauma and inequity, and

WHEREAS, the effects of exposure to violence, police brutality and systemic racism placed on BIPOC communities impacts emotional and mental well-being, and

WHEREAS, involvement in the criminal legal system has negative impacts on BIPOC individual and community determinants of health, and

WHEREAS, the King County Board of Health recognizes the connection between racism, sexism and gender-based violence

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Health of King County:

The Board of Health calls on the Washington state Legislature to urgently address racism as a public health crisis and support Black, Indigenous and People of Color by:

- A. Significantly investing in Foundational Public Health Services and funding local COVID-19 response work;
- B. Increasing access to health care coverage for those who are not eligible for current federal subsidies or public insurance programs;
- C. Addressing housing needs for Black, Indigenous and People of Color and low-income communities;
- D. Providing continued investment in firearm violence and injury prevention;
- E. Reforming the criminal legal system and minimize harm that results from legal system involvement;

- G. Supporting efforts to address gender-based violence; and
- H. Increasing funding for culturally relevant and community based behavioral health services.