



General Assembly

January Session, 2021

Raised Bill No. 6662

LCO No. 5542



Referred to Committee on APPROPRIATIONS

Introduced by:
(APP)

AN ACT DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS AND ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION ON RACIAL EQUITY IN PUBLIC HEALTH.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) It is hereby declared that
2 racism constitutes a public health crisis in this state and will continue to
3 constitute a public health crisis until the goals set forth in section 2 of
4 this act are attained, and the Commission on Racial Equity in Public
5 Health is terminated pursuant to said section.

6 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a
7 Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health, to document and make
8 recommendations to decrease the effect of racism on public health. The
9 commission shall be part of the Executive Department.

10 (b) The commission shall consist of the following members:

11 (1) The Commissioner of Public Health, or the commissioner's

12 designee;

13 (2) The Commissioner of Children and Families, or the
14 commissioner's designee;

15 (3) The Commissioner of Early Childhood, or the commissioner's
16 designee;

17 (4) The Commissioner of Housing, or the commissioner's designee;

18 (5) The Commissioner of Social Services, or the commissioner's
19 designee;

20 (6) The Commissioner of Agriculture, or the commissioner's
21 designee;

22 (7) The Commissioner of Economic and Community Development,
23 or the commissioner's designee;

24 (8) The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee;

25 (9) The chief executive officer of the Connecticut Health Insurance
26 Exchange, or a designee;

27 (10) The executive director of the Commission on Women, Children,
28 Seniors, Equity and Opportunity, or a designee;

29 (11) The executive director of the Office of Health Strategy, or a
30 designee;

31 (12) The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or the
32 secretary's designee;

33 (13) The Commissioner of Administrative Services, or the
34 commissioner's designee;

35 (14) The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection, or
36 the commissioner's designee;

37 (15) The Commissioner of Correction, or the commissioner's

38 designee;

39 (16) At least one person appointed by the Governor who has
40 experience with community organizations actively working to address
41 racism and related health disparities and inequities;

42 (17) At least one person appointed by the Governor who has
43 experience with community organizations actively working to address
44 the needs of people of color who also identify as LGBTQ+ or as having
45 a disability; and

46 (18) At least one person appointed by the Governor who has
47 experience with community-based nongovernmental organizations.

48 (c) All initial appointments to the commission made under
49 subdivisions (14) to (18), inclusive, of subsection (b) of this section shall
50 be made not later than sixty days after the effective day of this section.
51 Appointed members shall serve a term that is coterminous with the
52 appointing official and appointed members may serve more than one
53 term.

54 (d) The executive director of the Office of Health Strategy, or the
55 executive director's designee, shall serve as chairperson of the
56 commission. Such chairperson shall schedule the first meeting of the
57 commission, which shall be held not later than sixty days after the
58 effective date of this section.

59 (e) The commission, by majority vote, shall hire an executive director
60 to serve as administrative staff of the commission, who shall serve at the
61 pleasure of the commission.

62 (f) Members shall continue to serve until their successors are
63 appointed. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority. Any
64 vacancy occurring other than by expiration of term shall be filled for the
65 balance of the unexpired term.

66 (g) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum for the
67 transaction of any business and any decision shall be by a majority vote

68 of those present at a meeting. The commission may adopt rules of
69 procedure.

70 (h) The members of the commission shall serve without
71 compensation, but shall, within the limits of available funds, be
72 reimbursed for expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of
73 their duties.

74 (i) The commission shall have the following powers and duties: (1)
75 Support collaboration by bringing together partners from many
76 different sectors to recognize the links between health and other issue
77 and policy areas and build new partnerships to promote health and
78 equity and increase government efficiency; (2) create the comprehensive
79 strategic plan to eliminate health disparities and inequities across
80 sectors, in accordance with section 3 of this act; (3) obtain from any
81 executive department, board, commission or other agency of the state
82 or any organization or other entity such assistance as necessary and
83 available to carry out the purposes of this section; (4) accept any gift,
84 donation or bequest for the purpose of performing the duties described
85 in this section; (5) establish bylaws to govern its procedures; and (6)
86 perform such other acts as may be necessary and appropriate to carry
87 out the duties described in this section.

88 (j) The commission shall engage with a diverse range of community
89 members, including people of color who identify as members of diverse
90 groups of the state population, including on the basis of race, ethnicity,
91 sexual orientation, gender identity and disability, who experience
92 inequities in health, to make recommendations to the relevant state
93 agencies or other entities on an ongoing basis concerning the following:
94 (1) Institutional racism in the state's laws and regulations impacting
95 public health; (2) racial disparity in the state's criminal justice system
96 and its impact on the health and well-being of individuals and families,
97 including overall health outcomes and rates of depression, suicide,
98 substance use disorder and chronic disease; (3) racial disparities in
99 access to the resources necessary for healthy living, including, but not
100 limited to, access to adequate fresh food and physical activity, public

101 safety and the decrease of pollution in communities; (4) racial disparities
102 in health outcomes; (5) the impact of zoning restrictions on the creation
103 of housing disparities and such disparities' impact on public health; and
104 (6) racial disparities in state hiring and contracting processes.

105 (k) The commission shall not terminate until the state has attained the
106 goal of at least seventy per cent reduction in disparities, as determined
107 by the commission using available scientifically-based measurements,
108 in the following areas: (1) Kindergarten readiness, third grade reading
109 proficiency, scores on the mastery examination, administered pursuant
110 to section 10-14n of the general statutes, rates of school-based discipline,
111 high school graduation rates and retention rates after the first year of
112 study for institutions of higher education in the state, as defined in
113 section 3-22a of the general statutes; (2) health insurance coverage rates,
114 pregnancy and infant health outcomes, emergency room visits and
115 deaths related to conditions associated with exposure to environmental
116 pollutants, including respiratory ailments, quality of life, life
117 expectancy, and self-reported well-being surveys; (3) rates of
118 involvement with the justice system; and (4) rates of poverty, income,
119 housing insecurity, lead poisoning and access to adequate healthy
120 nutrition.

121 (l) Not later than January 1, 2022, and annually thereafter, the
122 commission shall submit a report to the Secretary of the Office of Policy
123 and Management and the joint standing committees of the General
124 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health and
125 appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, in accordance with the
126 provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, concerning (1) the
127 activities of the commission during the prior year; (2) any progress
128 made in attaining the goal described in subsection (k) of this section; (3)
129 any recommended changes to such goal based on the research
130 conducted by the commission, any disparity study performed by any
131 state agency or entity, or any community input received; and (4) any
132 recommendations for policy changes or amendments to state law.

133 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Commission on Racial

134 Equity in Public Health, established under section 2 of this act, shall
135 develop and periodically update a comprehensive strategic plan to
136 eliminate health disparities and inequities across sectors, including
137 consideration of the following: Air and water quality, natural resources
138 and agricultural land, affordable housing, infrastructure systems, public
139 health, access to quality health care, social services, sustainable
140 communities and the impact of climate change.

141 (b) Such plan shall address the incorporation of health and equity into
142 specific policies, programs and government decision-making processes
143 including, but not limited to, the following: (1) Disparities in laws and
144 regulations impacting public health; (2) disparities in the criminal justice
145 system; (3) disparities in access to resources, including, but not limited
146 to, healthy food, safe housing, public safety and environments free of
147 excess pollution; and (4) disparities in access to quality health care.

148 Sec. 4. Subsection (a) of section 4-9a of the general statutes is repealed
149 and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from passage*):

150 (a) The Governor shall appoint the chairperson and executive
151 director, if any, of all boards and commissions within the Executive
152 Department, except the State Properties Review Board, the State
153 Elections Enforcement Commission, the Commission on Human Rights
154 and Opportunities, the Commission on Fire Prevention and Control, the
155 Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board, [and] the Transportation Policy
156 Advisory Council and the Commission on Racial Equity in Public
157 Health.

158 Sec. 5. (*Effective from passage*) The Commissioner of Public Health shall
159 study the development and implementation of a recruitment and
160 retention program for health care workers in the state who are people of
161 color. Not later than January 1, 2022, the commissioner shall report the
162 results of such study, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a
163 of the general statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General
164 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health. Such
165 report shall include any legislative recommendations to improve the

166 recruitment and retention of people of color in the health care sector,
167 including, but not limited to, recommendations for the implementation
168 of such recruitment and retention program.

169 Sec. 6. (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Energy and
170 Environmental Protection shall perform an assessment of racial equity
171 within environmental health quality programs administered by said
172 department. Not later than January 1, 2022, the department shall submit
173 a report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general
174 statutes, to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly
175 having cognizance of matters relating to the environment. Such report
176 shall include the results of such assessment and any legislative
177 recommendations to improve racial equity within such programs.

178 Sec. 7. (*Effective from passage*) (a) As used in this section, "cultural
179 humility" means a continuing commitment to (1) self-evaluation and
180 critique of one's own worldview with regard to differences in cultural
181 traditions and belief systems, and (2) awareness of, and active
182 mitigation of, power imbalances between cultures.

183 (b) The Office of Higher Education, in collaboration with the Board
184 of Regents for Higher Education and the Board of Trustees of The
185 University of Connecticut, shall evaluate the recruitment and retention
186 of people of color in health care preparation programs offered by the
187 constituent units of the state system of higher education and the
188 inclusion of cultural humility education in such programs. Not later
189 than January 1, 2022, the office shall submit a report, in accordance with
190 the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, to the joint
191 standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
192 matters relating to higher education. Such report shall include the
193 results of such evaluation and any legislative recommendations to
194 improve the recruitment and retention of people of color in such
195 programs and include additional cultural humility education in such
196 programs.

197 Sec. 8. Subsection (b) of section 2-128 of the general statutes is

198 repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective from*
199 *passage*):

200 (b) Not later than January first, annually, the executive director of the
201 commission shall submit a status report, organized by subcommission,
202 concerning its efforts in promoting the desired results listed in
203 subdivision (1) of subsection (a) of this section to the joint standing
204 committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters
205 relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies in
206 accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a. On and after January 1,
207 2022, such report shall include the status of amendments to the joint
208 rules of the House of Representatives and the Senate concerning the
209 preparation of racial and ethnic impact statements pursuant to section
210 2-24b.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>from passage</i>	4-9a(a)
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>from passage</i>	2-128(b)

Statement of Purpose:

To declare racism as a public health crisis, establish the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health and require studies concerning the racial equity of various state programs related to such crisis.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]