

House Resolution 78

By: Representatives Scott of the 76th, Mitchell of the 88th, Smyre of the 135th, Williams of the 168th, Hugley of the 136th, and others

A RESOLUTION

- 1 Declaring racism a public health crisis in Georgia; and for other purposes.
- 2 WHEREAS, the United States has historically and systemically disadvantaged racial, ethnic,
3 and religious groups across the country, creating deep-seated problems that persist today,
4 more than 150 years after slavery ended and 50 years after the civil rights movement; and
- 5 WHEREAS, it is widely understood that structural racism manifests in differential access by
6 race to opportunities, resources, conditions, and power within the country's medical and
7 public health systems; and
- 8 WHEREAS, black people contend with disproportionately high death rates for chronic health
9 conditions such as heart disease, stroke, and cancer; and
- 10 WHEREAS, heart disease is the leading cause of death for Black women, and according to
11 the *American Medical Association Journal of Ethics*, this is largely due to race-related stress,
12 barriers to care, and racism from healthcare providers; and

13 WHEREAS, black women die from pregnancy and childbirth at three to four times the rate
14 of white women, and black children are more than twice as likely to have asthma as white
15 children; and

16 WHEREAS, these systemic racial health disparities have myriad causes, such as lack of
17 health insurance, failures of the medical system, and inadequate access to healthcare; and

18 WHEREAS, black people are five times more likely than white people to be killed by police
19 shootings while unarmed; and

20 WHEREAS, excessive police force and verbal altercations between law enforcement officers
21 and the public are a communal violence, particularly among black and brown communities,
22 wherein these incidents are more prevalent and pervasive, which significantly drives
23 unnecessary and costly injury and death; and

24 WHEREAS, the prevalence of systemic racism as a driver of health inequity is also
25 particularly evident in findings from a 2018 study showing that law enforcement involved
26 deaths of unarmed black individuals were associated with adverse mental health issues
27 among black adults, resulting in a spillover effect on the population regardless of whether
28 the individual affected had a personal relationship with the victim or if the incident was
29 experienced vicariously; and

30 WHEREAS, the trauma of violence in a person's life is associated with chronic stress, higher
31 rates of comorbidities, and lower life expectancy, all of which bear extensive care and
32 economic burdens on healthcare systems while sapping the strength of affected families and
33 communities; and

34 WHEREAS, sustained exposure to racism in all of its forms is a critical determinant of health
35 because it increases stress hormones, such as cortisol, which impacts the physical, emotional,
36 and mental well-being of those who experience racism each and every day; and

37 WHEREAS, studies have shown that implicit biases and internalized racism has led to black
38 and brown people having less access to healthcare, preventive care, and quality education
39 and suffering from higher incarceration rates and increased mortality rates; and

40 WHEREAS, in New Jersey, one of the wealthiest states in America, the median net worth
41 for white families is \$352,000, the highest net wealth in America; the median net worth for
42 New Jersey's black families is just \$6,100; and

43 WHEREAS, black people in Georgia are three times more likely to face the use of force by
44 a police officer than white people; and

45 WHEREAS, in 2016, the United States Department of Justice found that 75 percent of all
46 police stops in the City of Newark were unconstitutional, and over 20 percent of police stops
47 involved excessive use of force; and

48 WHEREAS, Georgia maintains a public school system in which nearly half of the state's
49 black, latina, and latino students attend schools that are at least 90 percent non-white; and

50 WHEREAS, in Georgia, a black child is 21 times more likely than a white child to be
51 sentenced to prison—the highest youth incarceration disparity in America—even though
52 black and white children commit most offenses at similar rates; and

53 WHEREAS, the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the
54 American Medical Association, the American College of Physicians, and the American
55 Public Health Association have all formally declared that, along with COVID-19, racism is
56 a public health issue and called upon the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and
57 other leading health organizations to study the public health effects of racism; physical and
58 verbal violence between law enforcement officers and black and brown communities; and
59 the health, economic, education, and legal disparities rooted in a history of unequal treatment
60 in racially marginalized communities; and

61 WHEREAS, the foregoing findings demonstrate the prevalence of systemic racism, racism's
62 role as a driver of health inequity, and the detrimental effects that racism has on the citizens
63 of the State of Georgia and this country.

64 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that
65 the members of this body declare racism a public health crisis in the State of Georgia.

66 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized
67 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the
68 Commissioner of Health and the Attorney General.