



DATE: 20 March 2021

To: Representative Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Representative Scot Z. Matayoshi, Vice Chair
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs

Representative Linda Ichiyama, Chair
Representative Stacelynn K.M. Eli, Vice Chair
House Committee on Pandemic and Disaster Preparedness

Re: Strong Support of HR 90 DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Hrg: Monday March 29, 2021, 2:00PM conference room 325 via Videoconference

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 500 community members, public health professionals, and organizations statewide dedicated to improving public health. Our mission is to promote public health in Hawai'i through leadership, collaboration, education and advocacy. Issues around social justice and equity in areas that extend beyond the traditional context of health (e.g., education, digital equity, cultural sensitivity), can have profound impacts on health equity and well-being. Therefore, as stewards of public health, HPHA is advocating for equity in all policies.

HPHA strongly supports HR 90, declaring racism as a public health crisis. The World Health Organization, the Center for Disease Control, the American Association of Public Health, major medical associations such as the American Medical Association, and branches of the Hawai'i State Department of Health have recognized racism's influence on public health. Simply stated, racism is a threat to public health. In addition to causing threats due to violence and hate crimes, systemic racism and social injustice also contribute to health inequities among marginalized communities. This is especially true among the Native Hawaiian population, which experience significant health inequities and are overrepresented in prisons and jails. The Native Hawaiian population has endured a history of trauma due to injustices by colonizers and today experiences the impact of systemic racism.

We urge you to support HR 90 and commit to reducing health disparities for Native Hawaiians and other groups by identifying and addressing social determinants of health and dismantling racist policies. We urge you to recognize the importance of educational opportunities and training about systemic racism so that others understand the issue of systemic racism in human and social services, economic development, health care and public safety throughout our state.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Leocadia Conlon'.

J. Leocadia Conlon, PhD, MPH, PA-C
Legislative Committee Co-Chair
Hawaii Public Health Association