



DATE: April 13, 2021

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary
Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Re: Strong Support of HCR 112 DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Hrg: Monday April 14, 2021, 9:30AM via Videoconference

The Hawai'i Public Health Association (HPHA) is a group of over 400 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** HCR 112, 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. Racism presents a well-recognized threat to health and well-being from violence and hate crimes. Police violence against African Americans and the rise in hate crimes against Asian Americans are prime illustrations of this point. However, the persistence of structural and systemic racism contributes to widespread health and social inequities among across the state in more insidious ways. Native Hawaiians, the indigenous people of Hawai'i, once thrived. However, racism led to the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom, laws prohibiting cultural practices, segregation, and appropriation of land, which created social and health disparities that we still see today. While the laws that prohibit hula or the use of the Hawaiian language in school are gone, the health and social inequities remain. Allowing the proliferation of these inequities, borne out of a racist past, is to condone systemic racism.

We urge you to support HCR 112 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 'Claire Townsend Ing'.

Claire Townsend Ing, DrPH,
Legislative Committee Co-Chair
Hawaii Public Health Association

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