



HCR112
DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS
Ke Kōmike ‘Aha Kenekoa o ka Ho‘okolokolo
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Apelila 14, 2021

9:30 a.m.

Hālāwai Keleka‘a‘ike

The Office of Hawaiian Affairs (OHA) **SUPPORTS** HCR112, which would declare racism as a public health crisis, and urge the State to commit to several actions to assist in the dismantling of racism in Hawai‘i.

OHA has long advocated for meaningful policies, including targeted and systemic actions, necessary to help reduce the health inequities of Native Hawaiians and to better protect and uplift the health and vitality of the Lāhui. OHA’s most recent strategic priorities included Maui Ola (Health), which represents our continuing commitment to improve the quality of life of Native Hawaiians. In furtherance of this commitment, and in line with the Hawai‘i State Planning Act under Hawai‘i Revised Statutes § 226-20, OHA supports a “social determinants of health” approach to health policy, which takes a holistic and systemic view in addressing the health of Hawai‘i’s communities. Accordingly, OHA appreciates that **HCR112 may facilitate an examination of the racial inequities and disparities within those social determinants of health affecting Native Hawaiians and other health-vulnerable communities, including through the critically needed improvement of state data governance practices.**

OHA further appreciates that this measure would facilitate improved data collection and governance practices within the State. As the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted, timely, consistent, and appropriately disaggregated data for Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are essential to best inform our programmatic interventions, whether it be for COVID-19 or general public health planning, as well as data driven policymaking. OHA’s Data Governance Resolution, HCR3/SCR5, streamlines the acknowledged need for a coordinated approach for not only public health data, but also data related to various social determinants of health. OHA accordingly emphasizes that improved data governance and disaggregated Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander data is part of what is needed to identify and reconcile the impacts of racism in Hawai‘i, and ensure equitable policymaking as this resolution proposes.

As a final note, OHA appreciates specific components within the resolution that are deemed as best practices¹ in declaring racism as a public health crisis: (1) defining racism; (2) specifically acknowledging Hawai‘i’s history to facilitate truth and conciliation; (3) urging the use of a racial equity tool; and (4) recommending the adoption of a Hawai‘i-oriented, culturally-based health justice framework. The unique colonial history of Hawai‘i and the Pacific, including a legacy of targeted racist policies by Western colonizers, has resulted in particularized impacts on Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders; this measure presents a tailored and best practices-informed approach to address and dismantle racism, including its specific impacts on Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in Hawai‘i.

Accordingly, OHA urges the Committee to **PASS** HCR112. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

¹ Betsy Lawton and Dawn Hunter, Declarations Of Racism As A Public Health Crisis: Utilizing Declarations To Address Health Inequities (January 21, 2021), <https://www.networkforphl.org/resources/declarations-of-racism-as-a-public-health-crisis-utilizing-declarations-to-address-health-inequities/>.



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

Legislative Testimony

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Judiciary
Wednesday, April 14, 2021 at 9:30 a.m.

By

Jerris Hedges, MD, Dean
Keawe Kaholokula, MD, Chair
Native Hawaiian Health
John A. Burns School of Medicine
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa

HCR 112 – DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in **support** of HCR 112. This resolution declares racism as a public health crisis, and recognizes the importance of educational opportunities, training and continued learning aimed at understanding and addressing systemic racism. The Governor is also urged to address racism in all state departments in an effort to promote racial equality.

The John A. Burns School of Medicine has been committed to helping the State address social inequities in order to deal with health disparities in Hawai'i. We have long recognized the issues faced by native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) groups in accessing health care as well as the problems that stem from the lack of proper medical treatment. Racism is a threat to public health and safety, and is a social determinant of health, shaping access to the resources that create opportunities for health, including public safety, housing, education, and employment, and is a persistent barrier to health equity for all of Hawai'i. The COVID-19 pandemic brought these disparities into greater focus when it was found that the highest rates of positive cases in Hawai'i were among native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander groups. Addressing systemic racism at the departmental level is an important step toward creating social equality throughout the State.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE ON PRISONS

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COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair

Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

9:30 AM

STRONG SUPPORT FOR HCR 112 – RACISM IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Aloha Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole and Members of the Committee:

My name is Kat Brady and I am the Coordinator of Community Alliance on Prisons, a community initiative promoting smart justice policies in Hawai`i for more than two decades. This testimony is respectfully offered on behalf of the more than 4,000 Hawai`i individuals living behind bars or under the “care and custody” of the Department of Public Safety on any given day. We are always mindful that 1,075 of Hawai`i’s imprisoned people are serving their sentences abroad thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes and, for the disproportionate number of incarcerated Kanaka Maoli, far, far from their ancestral lands.

Mahalo for hearing this important resolution. Community Alliance on Prisons is in strong support and we assert that if public policy were developed through a public health lens, everything would look different. No one would be expendable. Racism IS a public health crisis, and a political problem as well because the entire western system is dependent upon structural racism by those who benefit from it.

There have been numerous studies that show the overcriminalization of Kanaka Maoli in their own country, and they have been ignored by the government. The data show¹ that Kanaka are no different than any other group in the criminal legal system, yet are more likely to be incarcerated than anyone else. One look inside our jails and prisons makes it pretty clear that they are Brown, over-populated with Kanaka Maoli and Pacific Islanders.

In 2010, at least 12,000 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders were under the supervision of the U.S. correctional system. Over 3,600 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders

¹ THE DISPARATE IMPACT OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM ON NATIVE HAWAIIANS, Office of Hawaiian Affairs.
https://19of32x2y133s8o4xza0gf14-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/factsheets_final_web_0.pdf

were in prison², 1 540 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders were in jail³, 21,300 were on parole, and 6,800 were on probation⁴.

There are 447 per 100,000 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island adults in prison, a ratio higher than Whites (425).⁵

The number of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Island persons in custody increased 22% between 2002 and 2010, a rate higher average (8%) and higher than any other racial group except for Native Americans and Alaska Natives (29%).⁶

Among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, women are disproportionately incarcerated. In 2010, over 1 in 8 incarcerated persons in custody were female. On average, 1 in 12 Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islands incarcerated persons in custody were female.⁷

Some states experienced disproportionate growth in the number of incarcerated. Between 2002 and 2010, the number of NHPI incarcerated persons in California increased 144%, while the total number of incarcerated persons increased 2%. The number of NHPI incarcerated persons in Utah increased 134%, while the total number of incarcerated persons increased 27% over the decade. While the number of incarcerated persons overall decreased in Hawai'i (-10%), there was an 8% increase in the number of NHPI incarcerated in the state.⁷

A 2010 study by the Office of Hawaiian Affairs found that Hawai'i holds 50% of its prisoners in the continental United States, and that Native Hawaiians make up a disproportionate number of those sent to out-of-state prison facilities (41%).⁸

Data on Native Hawaiians/Kanaka Maoli in the criminal legal system has been analyzed for 50 years and nothing has changed, except to say it has gotten worse. It is no secret that jails and prisons in Hawai'i are overflowing with Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander peoples.

² U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics. 2010. Note: BJS's official measure of prison population is based on the count of prisoners under jurisdiction or legal authority of state and federal correctional officials, which includes local jails, halfway houses, and other facilities. However, race data by jurisdiction is not available. Prisoner race data in this report includes all those who are held under custody, which includes those in private and publicly owned state and federal facilities.

³ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Annual Survey of Jails. 2010.

⁴ Glaze, Lauren E., and Thomas P. Bonczar. "Probation and Parole in the United States, 2010." U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census SF2, Table DP-1.

⁶ U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Prisoner Statistics, 2002–2010.

⁷ Id.

⁸ See FN 1

The Hawai'i Constitution is unique in honoring our host culture and enshrining Hawaiian values contained in the Aloha Spirit Law from Chapter 5 of Hawai'i Revised Statutes:

§ 5-7.5 "Aloha Spirit". (a) "Aloha Spirit" is the coordination of mind and heart within each person. It brings each person to the self. Each person must think and emote good feelings to others. In the contemplation and presence of the life force, "Aloha", the following unuhi laulā loa may be used:

"Akahai", meaning kindness to be expressed with tenderness;

"Lōkahi", meaning unity, to be expressed with harmony;

"Olu'olu" meaning agreeable, to be expressed with pleasantness;

"Ha'aha'a", meaning humility, to be expressed with modesty;

"Ahonui", meaning patience, to be expressed with perseverance.

These are traits of character that express the charm, warmth and sincerity of Hawaii's people. It was the working philosophy of native Hawaiians and was presented as a gift to the people of Hawai'i. "Aloha" is more than a word of greeting or farewell or a salutation. "Aloha" means mutual regard and affection and extends warmth in caring with no obligation in return. "Aloha" is the essence of relationships in which each person is important to every other person for collective existence. "Aloha" means to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen and to know the unknowable.

(b) In exercising their power on behalf of the people and in fulfillment of their responsibilities, obligations and service to the people, the legislature, governor, lieutenant governor, executive officers of each department, the chief justice, associate justices, and judges of the appellate, circuit, and district courts may contemplate and reside with the life force and give consideration to the "Aloha Spirit". [L 1986, c 202, § 1]

Hawai'i has proven itself to be an outlier in the criminal legal arena, therefore, tackling racism in a system dependent upon a tiered system built upon a *racist* structure will be a challenge unless there is a real and HONEST effort to confront the terrible policies that have come to the fore in the COVID pandemic.

While most jurisdictions are realizing the unsustainability of harsh sentencing and incarceration, Hawai'i continues to push enhanced sentencing, mandatory minimums, and building even more human cages, while we banish almost 50% of our prison population to the hands of corporate prison profiteers. Kanaka Maoli are the majority of incarcerated persons banished thousands of miles away from their loved ones, their homes, and their ancestral lands where too many of our people have died.

COVID has exposed the disparity in the health system with data showing that Kanaka Maoli and Pacific Islanders are at an elevated risk for infection along with the other glaring health statistics that are already known in these communities.

We suggest that in the criminal legal realm, the recommendations of the HCR 85 Correctional Reform Task Force⁹ is a great place to start. **Implementing** those researched and evidence-based recommendations and **then funding** them will send a strong message to the community that you are serious. Here are some of the broad categories the report identifies:

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HCR 85 TASK FORCE

- Transition to a more effective and sustainable correctional model that focuses on rehabilitation rather than punishment
- Adopt a comprehensive strategy to address the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in the criminal justice and correctional systems.
- Set numerical goals and a timetable for reducing Hawaii's prison population, and in particular, the number and percent of Native Hawaiians in the correctional system.
- Create a Sentencing Reform Commission to review the penal code with the goal of downgrading offenses and shortening sentences.
- Create an Independent Prison Oversight and Implementation Commission. *The Commission has operated for more than a year with no funding and no support and there has been NO implementation of the recommendations.*
- Create an Academy to educate and train correctional workers at all levels.
- Improve in-custody programs by focusing on evidence-based programs that will prepare prisoners for reentry into society.
- Improve the reentry process and support the development of new transitional housing.
- Improve Conditions for Incarcerated Women.
- Stop planning a large capacity jail to replace OCCC and establish a working group of stakeholders and government officials to rethink the jail issue.

Community Alliance on Prisons hopes that the legislature is serious about dismantling racism. Every great journey starts with the first step. The community will be watching closely to see if this is just lip service or a real commitment by the state to undue the draconian and unfair policies that have greased the way for people – mostly people of color - to become entangled in the criminal legal processing web.

Hawai'i knows what to do, we have the data and research to support creating a more humane and just system. We have incredible researchers here in Hawai'i who understand the pressing issues in Hawai'i nei. It takes courage AND political will to **PRACTICE OUT OF CELL THINKING**. We sincerely hope that the government is ready to do so.

We urge the committee to pass this measure. Mahalo for this opportunity to testify and share our research.

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

⁹ Creating Better Outcomes, Safer Communities, Final Report of the House Concurrent Resolution 85 Task Force on Prison Reform to the Hawai'i Legislature 2019 Regular Session, December 2018.

https://www.courts.state.hi.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/HCR-85_task_force_final_report.pdf

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR 112

TO: Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Keohokalole, & Judiciary Committee

FROM: Nikos Leverenz
Grants, Development & Policy Manager

DATE: April 14, 2021 (9:30 AM)

Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) **supports** HCR 112, which declares racism as a public health crisis in Hawai'i. In May 2020, the American Public Health Association (APHA) [declared](#): "Racism is a longstanding systemic structure in this country that must be dismantled through brutally honest conversations, policy changes and practices." Since the death of George Floyd, [a number of states and local governments have declared that racism is a public health crisis](#).

Unfortunately, this measure does not specifically point to white supremacy as a key source of the dispossession and maltreatment of those impacted by structural racism, including Native Hawaiians and other non-whites. White supremacy in Hawai'i also impacts its large Filipinx population, which struggles with longstanding economic and health disparities, [exacerbated during this ongoing pandemic period](#), and remains underrepresented in Hawai'i's elected bodies and learned professions.

This hearing comes the week after a [new report](#) from UH Mānoa disclosed that [public school students who are Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Black, or disabled are subject to encounters with law enforcement at significantly disproportionate rates](#). The report also notes that Hawai'i leads the country in terms of students arrested and referred to law enforcement at almost 10%.

That ***one in ten*** K-12 students in Hawai'i's public schools are referred to law enforcement is a crisis that demands concerted attention at every level of government. On this front and others, ***the Legislature must lead the way*** toward a more just, equitable, and compassionate future for every person who resides in this archipelago.

Among the health disparities faced by Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations are [higher rates of HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and tuberculosis than the general population](#) and higher rates of chronic diseases that include diabetes, heart disease, obesity and asthma. [COVID-19 has hit Marshallese and other Micronesians residents in Hawaii especially hard](#), with state health authorities being less than proactive in providing needed language-appropriate health information through at least the first six months of the pandemic.

Income is the most important determinant of health, with those living in poverty having less access to routine medical care, higher rates of chronic diseases, and shortened life expectancies. Poverty reinforces the accumulation of [adverse childhood experiences correlating with unfavorable health outcomes](#) in adulthood.

[Hawaii's poverty rate prior to the pandemic was just over 11% of the total population, with substantially higher percentages among Native Hawaiians \(15.5%\), Samoans \(20.4%\), Tongans \(16.2%\), Marshallese \(51.1%\), Vietnamese \(18%\), and Native Americans \(18.1%\).](#) Hawaii should recalibrate its tax structure through measures like those advanced by the [Hawaii Tax Fairness Coalition](#) in order help ensure that downturns in state and local tax revenues do not fall the hardest on those who are already below the poverty line. Notably, Hawaii also continues to have the lowest property taxes in the nation. Its current minimum wage of \$10.10 ranks below Arkansas, Arizona, New Mexico, District of Columbia, and U.S. Virgin Islands.

Native Hawaiians continue to be disproportionately impacted by Hawaii's criminal legal system, as has been the case since the late 19th Century. [Native Hawaiians are more likely to get a prison sentence, and for longer periods of time, than other groups. Native Hawaiians comprise the highest percentage of those incarcerated in out-of-state and women's prisons. Native Hawaiians are sentenced to longer probation terms than other groups. Native Hawaiians also bear a disproportionate burden of the punitive response to drug use, with sentencing structures, police practices, and prosecutorial practices contributing to that disproportionality.](#)

It is imperative that Hawaii embark on concerted responses to drug use that are grounded in public health, including harm reduction services and appropriate medical care, and not maintain its overreliance on placing individuals with behavioral health problems in jail or prison,

which is latently injurious to individual health, and prolonged periods of criminal legal supervision that include probation and parole.

Current punitive responses to drug use constitute white supremacy and structural racism in ignominious operation. This includes the classification of personal drug possession and use *in any amount* as felonious “promotion of a dangerous drug” under HRS Section 712-1243, punishable by a prison term of five years.

The preface to a 2018 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report, “[Mass Incarceration Threatens Health Equity in America](#),” outlines the perilous human toll of over-incarceration:

Mass incarceration disproportionately impacts lower-income communities, communities of color, and persons with disabilities, creating a barrier to achieving health equity. People who are incarcerated face greater chances for chronic health conditions, both while confined and long after their release. Incarceration exposes people to a wide range of conditions, such as poor sanitation and ventilation and solitary confinement, that are detrimental to long-term physical and mental health. After release, previously incarcerated individuals often face higher mortality rates and experience limited opportunities for gainful employment, stable housing, education, and other conditions needed for good health.

Mass incarceration’s reach extends far beyond the jail cell, impacting not only those behind bars, but their families, their communities, and the entire nation. Almost 10 million children have experienced having one or both parents incarcerated at some point in their lives—impacting their health and future opportunities. Within communities, mass incarceration disrupts social and family networks and economic development while across the country it consumes large portions of government budgets with negligible impact on crime rates.

The high individual, familial, and governmental costs associated with consigning persons with behavioral health problems to protracted involvement in the criminal legal system are readily apparent to those familiar with assessing punitive responses to drug use at the state, national, and international levels.

[The APHA vigorously endorses a public health response to drug use and misuse, including the decriminalization of personal drug possession and use. It urges state governments to eliminate “criminal penalties and collateral sanctions for personal drug use and possession offenses and to avoid unduly harsh administrative penalties, such as civil asset forfeiture...”](#)

As noted recently by a report from the Pew Charitable Trusts, [Hawai'i has the highest average term of probation in the nation at just under five years](#). Statewide probation reform that substantially reduces terms is another tangible means of repairing the harm of white supremacy and structural racism that are manifest in the operation of the state's criminal legal system.

This resolution laudably evinces an awareness that structural racism is a problem in Hawai'i. From that awareness should flow a slate of policy changes, including statutory revisions, that materially improve the lives of Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, African Americans, and others who are impacted by white supremacy and structural racism. Placing the brakes on the overcriminalization of these populations, including those who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability, and instead providing needed attention, care, and services is paramount.

In short, the corrosive legacy and ongoing deleterious impact of white supremacy and structural racism in our state cannot be adequately addressed without substantial reorientation of state and local policies and practices related to the criminalization of behavioral health problems.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Hawaii
*Holding Power Accountable*Statement Before The
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Wednesday, April 14, 2021

9:30 AM

Via Videoconference

in consideration of
HCR 112
DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.

Chair RHOADS, Vice Chair KEOHOKALOLE, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Common Cause Hawaii provides written comments regarding HCR 112, declaring racism as a public health crisis.

Common Cause Hawaii is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. We work to create open, honest, and accountable government that serves the public interest and promotes equal rights, opportunity, and representation for all.

Being silent in the face of wrongdoing is not an option; it is tacit cooperation and being complicit. Common Cause agrees, as stated in HCR 112, at page 4, lines 18-19, that it is “our collective efforts to dismantle all forms of racism at all levels and its impacts”

Let us not forget the words of Pastor Martin Neimöller:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

We all need to reject and call out racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination, or hate crimes against all Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), including women.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HCR 112. If you have questions of me, please contact me at sma@commoncause.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/8/2021 11:28:57 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Mike Golojuch, Sr.	Testifying for Rainbow Family 808	Support	No

Comments:

Rainbow Family 808 strongly supports HCR112, which would declare racism a public health crisis. Please pass this resolution. Thank you.

Mike Golojuch, Sr., Secretary/Board Member, Rainbow Family 808



Young Progressives Demanding Action
P.O. Box 11105
Honolulu, HI 96828

April 8, 2021

TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY
RE: Testimony in support of HCR112

Dear Senators,

Young Progressives Demanding Action (YPDA) **strongly supports** HCR112, which would declare racism a public health crisis.

Since 2019, policymakers in more than 50 American municipalities and three states have formally highlighted racism as a public health crisis. On September 3, 2020, Rep. Ayanna Pressley introduced [the Anti-Racism in Public Health Act](#) in Congress.

These kinds of declarations are an important first step in combating racism and ending White Supremacy, because they redirect the focus of policymakers onto the systems and structures of oppression. This prevents policymakers from dismissing the inequities and inequalities of our society as simply being the fault of individuals.

We must name the structural foundations of racist policies in areas such as housing, employment and the criminal-legal system. We must acknowledge the very real, very detrimental effects these policies have had on racial disparities in health outcomes and life expectancy.

This stark reality is reflected in the COVID-19 pandemic's disproportionate effect on communities of color. As of late July, Black people, who make up just 13 percent of the U.S. population, accounted for a quarter of COVID-19 deaths, according to an article in the Autumn 2020 issue of *Harvard Medicine*.

Across the country, local and state leaders are declaring racism a public health crisis or emergency. These declarations are an important first step in the movement to advance racial

equity and justice but they *must* be followed by allocation of resources and strategic action in concrete pieces of legislaion to follow.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Will Caron

Board President & Secretary, 2020–2021

action@ypdahawaii.org

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/8/2021 1:10:24 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Laurie Field	Testifying for Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates	Support	No

Comments:

Planned Parenthood Alliance Advocates supports HCR 112. Thank you!

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/9/2021 7:45:28 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Hardy Spoehr	Testifying for Spoehr Foundation	Support	No

Comments:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit supportive testimony for this resolution. We only need to look at the events of the past four years to understand why this resolution is so important.

Hardy Spoehr, President

Spoehr Foundation

1833 Vancouver Place

Honolulu, HI 96822



American Heart Association testimony in strong SUPPORT of HCR112/HR90 “Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis”

Chairman of the Board

Glen Kaneshige

President

Michael Lui, MD

Board Members

Rick Bruno, MD, FACEP

Jackie De Luz

Brandt Farias

Jason Fujita

Mimi Harris

Zia Khan, MD

Brandon Kurisu

Arnold Martines

Michael Rembis, FACHE

Andrew S. Rosen

Timothy Slottow

Jennifer Walker

The American Heart Association strongly supports HCR112/HR90, “Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis.”

Structural racism is a major cause of poor health and premature death from heart disease and stroke, according to an American Heart Association Presidential Advisory, “Call to Action: Structural Racism as a Fundamental Driver of Health Disparities,” published in the Association’s journal *Circulation* in November 2020 ([Call to Action: Structural Racism as a Fundamental Driver of Health Disparities: A Presidential Advisory From the American Heart Association \(ahajournals.org\)](https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/ATL.0000000000000000)). The advisory reviews the historical context, current state and potential solutions to address structural racism in the U.S., and outlines steps the Association is taking to address and mitigate the root causes of health care disparities.

The Association is focusing more aggressively on overcoming societal barriers created by structural racism because they contribute significantly to the disproportionate burden of cardiovascular risk factors (including high blood pressure, obesity and Type 2 diabetes) in Black, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic/Latino people compared with white people in the U.S.

While overall death rates from heart disease and stroke declined over the past two decades until a recent plateau, these gains were not equitably shared among people who are from the Black, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native or Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander communities.

The new Presidential Advisory highlights three key points:

- Structural racism is a current and pervasive problem, influenced by history and not merely an issue of the past.
- Structural racism is real and produces adverse effects, whether it is blatant to others or perceived only or primarily by those impacted.
- The task of dismantling the impact of structural racism on economic, social and health inequities is a shared responsibility that must belong to all of society.

Serving Hawaii since 1948

Our Mission:

“To be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.”

For more information on the AHA’s educational or research programs, visit www.heart.org or contact your nearest AHA office.

“Structural racism, by definition, is not a personal action or behavior or belief, it’s not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice,” said Keith Churchwell, M.D., FAHA, chair of the Advisory writing committee and president of Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, Conn. “Structural racism is an embedded part of legal, business and social constructs and a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist. Although structural racism has existed for centuries, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed and exacerbated the existing disparities in health disparities, as evidenced by the way the virus is disproportionately more prevalent in people from Black, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, or Hispanic/Latino communities.”

The Association also announced new strategic business goals, with an increased focus on health equity. By 2024, the American Heart Association will champion health equity by advancing cardiovascular health for all, including identifying and removing barriers to healthcare access and quality. Specifically, the Association has committed to:

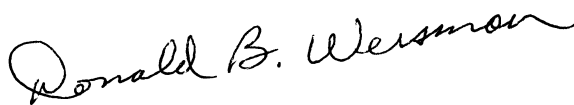
- Drive advances in research and discovery,
- Raise awareness, empower people and engage communities to improve their cardiovascular and brain health,
- Advocate relentlessly to improve healthcare quality and ensure access to healthcare for all, and
- Innovate new solutions to achieve equitable health for all.

In addition to working with allies to advocate for system change, the American Heart Association is examining its own organizational practices and processes to ensure they embrace antiracism within the Association and externally to better account for its interactions with volunteers, members, supporters and other organizations to end all forms of racism.

The Association stands ready to work with the Hawaii State Legislature and others in our community to address and make changes to the health inequities driven by structural racism.

We urge you to support HCR112/HR90.

Respectfully submitted,



Donald B. Weisman
Government Relations/Communications Director



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,

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

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

Senate Committee on Judiciary
Wednesday, April 14, 2021, 9:30am
Videoconference

Testimony in Support of HCR 112

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keokokalole, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support of HCR 11**, declaring racism as a public health crisis.

YWCA O'ahu is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. In 1900 we opened our doors to provide opportunity to women for growth, leadership and power to change. Today, over a century later, the YWCA O'ahu is the largest and oldest women's membership organization in the State of Hawaii. We are a charter member of the YWCA USA and is one of more than 200 community associations nationwide that share the mission of empowering women and eliminating racism.

As a new core of women are preparing for our future, we are committed to reinventing the YWCA for the 21st century so it remains relevant to all women as their lives and needs change. The YWCA offers a unique place – a place where women and girls can build relationships for life and have opportunities to move forward in life and give back to their community. Our three centers at the YWCA, Fernhurst, Kokokahi and Laniakea, provide valuable programs and services that develop women and girls' social, economic, leadership and community skills.

We are writing in strong support of this critical resolution. While Hawaii is different in many ways from the mainland, we are not immune to racism and the ways in which racism has impacted generations of our citizens. Racism has been long been looked at as a risk factor rather than what it is, the root cause of racial disparities that face our state and nation. As stated in the resolution, over the past year Covid-19 has “revealed, reaffirmed, and case into sharp relief the exigent nature of these pre-existing inequities caused by systemic racism”. While not new, COVID-19 has shone a new light on these existing issues and has presented us with yet another opportunity to balance the scales.

Racism is complex, multi-layered and often not talked about or challenged for these reasons. There is no easy answer or silver bullet to address racism and for that reason we support the many and varied ways this resolution calls on the State to begin tackling this pervasive issue in deliberate and meaningful ways. We must examine the racist foundations of our policies and

**eliminating racism
empowering women**

ywca

O'ahu

Fernhurst YWCA

1566 Wilder Avenue
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822
808.941.2231

Kokokahi YWCA

45-035 Kāne'ohe Bay Drive
Kāne'ohe, Hawai'i 96744
808.247.2124

Laniākea YWCA

1040 Richards Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813
808.538.7061

ywcaohu.org

procedures and work to rebuild systems from the ground up in many cases. This work will not be easy, but it must be done to truly dismantle the broken systems within our government, in our health care settings, in our communities and every other place that have not been serving the people of Hawaii equitably.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of HCR 112.

Jen Wilbur
Director of Advocacy
YWCA O'ahu

YWCA IS ON A MISSION



HCR112
DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

Senate Committee on Judiciary

April 14, 2021, 9:30am

Aloha e Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of HCR112, a resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis. This resolution, according to many advocates and particularly for communities most impacted by racism, is long overdue as the role of racism as a public health crisis has been long established and documented.

Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have been, and continue to be, uniquely impacted by racism that is ultimately resulting in poorer health outcomes as substantiated across various social determinants of health – in the criminal justice system, housing, education, health care, and employment.

As an organization whose mission is: *committed to providing the highest level of primary and preventive health services with special attention to the needs of Native Hawaiians and the medically underserved, and improving the health and wellness of individuals and their 'ohana regardless of their ability to pay*, Waimanalo Health Center focuses on improving health disparities to achieve equity, including through access to culturally integrated traditional practices. Traditional Hawaiian healing is holistic, takes time, and should be just as valued and accessible as western medicine. Addressing the trauma, both historical and contemporary, that patients are experiencing, should be as critical as addressing clinical outcomes like blood pressure and blood glucose.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the gaps in public health experienced with indigenous and immigrant communities. This resolution would declare racism as a public health crisis, as well as provide ways to dismantle racism through education, and adopting a Hawai'i-based, culturally-based health justice framework. Continuing specific community efforts in response to public health needs as food, housing assistance, access to health services, etc. are critical to this health justice framework.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HCR112. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

College of Health and Society

April 14, 2021

HCR112
DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS
Senate Committee on Judiciary

Aloha e Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and esteemed colleagues of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, it is wonderful to be “at the table” even if only via this letter of support for HCR112.

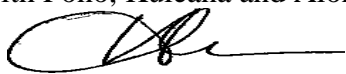
The opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of HCR112, a resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis, is truly an honor for me personally and professionally as a Pacific Islander American woman. This resolution, particularly for communities most impacted by racism, is long overdue as the role of racism as a public health crisis has been well established and documented.

My name is Halaevalu Vakalahi, I am a Professor and Dean of the College of Health and Society at Hawai'i Pacific University. I have kuleana over the disciplines of Nursing, Public Health, Physical Therapy, and Social Work, all fully accredited programs focused collectively on physical, mental, and community health. To build caliber and character, our student experiences are grounded in core values of aloha, pono, and kuleana; and a methodology continuum that leverages faculty and community partner expertise. At any given year, our College enrolls about 900 students and graduate about 200. We have and will continue to produce well educated, well trained, and well-rounded professionals to contribute to healthier communities.

Indeed, academia is positioned to level the playing field through accessibility and affordability of a university education. Regrettably, academia is not immune nor void of experiences with racism which results in gross underrepresentation of certain communities and consequential outcomes that can perpetuate for generations. Racism is a public health crisis given its intimate connection to poverty, food and housing insecurity, historical trauma, cultural injustice, colonization, and so forth. Nevertheless, we have renewed our unequivocal commitment to change the tides of racism and strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion in academia. HCR112 will define racism and provide ways to dismantle racism through higher education. This resolution will bring to light the criticality of representation, systems transformation, and investment in people. For Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, this would be an opportunity to address poor outcomes in education, healthcare, housing, criminal justice, and other systems. HCR112 will be a platform for creating a comprehensive response to racism including the creation of pipelines and pathways for advancement among grossly underrepresented communities, and investment in leadership development.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HCR112. Although we are playing catch up, this resolution is an opportunity to do better by our keiki, kupuna, and communities.

With Pono, Kuleana and Aloha,





HCR 112, DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.

APRIL 14, 2021 · SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ·
CHAIR SEN. KARL RHOADS

POSITION: Strong support.

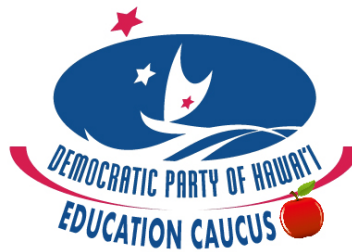
RATIONALE: Imua Alliance **strongly supports** HCR 112, declaring racism as a public health crisis.

Intolerance is an epidemic within the COVID-19 pandemic. As the coronavirus has surged throughout our shores, anti-Asian racism has soared. Stop AAPI Hate tracks reports of violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. Since the start of the pandemic, they've received reports of nearly **4,000 hate incidents directed toward Asians and Asian-Americans** across the U.S.

Similarly, a recent report from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, revealed that **hate crimes against Asian-Americans in 16 cities rose by 150 percent** in 2020.

Anti-Asian xenophobia has frequently resulted in violent acts. Just last month, an armed white male murdered six people of Asian ancestry in Atlanta, Georgia, in an act of racial terror. We must take a stand against racial discrimination. If we don't, as Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We will learn very shortly that racism is a sickness unto death."

Kris Coffield · Executive Director, Imua Alliance · (808) 679-7454 · kris@imuaalliance.org



HCR 112, DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

APRIL 14, 2021 · SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ·
CHAIR SEN. KARL RHOADS

POSITION: Strong support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **strongly supports** HCR 112, declaring racism as a public health crisis.

Intolerance is an epidemic within the COVID-19 pandemic. As the coronavirus has surged throughout our shores, anti-Asian racism has soared. Stop AAPI Hate tracks reports of violence against Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. Since the start of the pandemic, they've received reports of **nearly 4,000 hate incidents directed toward Asians and Asian-Americans** across the U.S. Similarly, a recent report from the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, revealed that **hate crimes against Asian-Americans in 16 cities rose by 150 percent** in 2020.

Anti-Asian xenophobia has frequently resulted in violent acts. Just last month, an armed white male murdered eight people of Asian ancestry in Atlanta, Georgia, in an act of racial terror. We must take a stand against racial discrimination. If we don't, as Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We will learn very shortly that racism is a sickness unto death."

**Kris Coffield · Chairperson, Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus ·
(808) 679-7454 · kriscoffield@gmail.com**

Kris Coffield, Chair · David Negaard, Vice Chair · Jun Shin, Secretary · Amber Adjuja, Treasurer ·
Amy Perruso, Non-Male SCC Representative · Justin Hughey, Non-Female SCC Representative



Hawaii
Children's Action Network Speaks!
Building a unified voice for Hawaii's children

Hawai'i Children's Action Network Speaks! is a nonpartisan 501c4 nonprofit committed to advocating for children and their families. Our core issues are safety, health, and education.

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

Re: **HCR 112- Declaring racism is a public health crisis**
9:30 AM, April 14, 2021

Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and committee members,

On behalf of HCAN Speaks!, thank you for the opportunity to testify in **support HCR 112**, declaring that racism is a public health crisis and urging the state to commit to recognizing and addressing the resulting inequities.

It has been just over one week since the fatal shooting of Iremamber Sykap and while his family mourns the loss of this child's life, we have witnessed how racism is alive and well in Hawai'i. While this resolution is a first step towards correcting systems of injustice and inequities, we must move quickly to dissolve the policies and practices that continue to harm and kill our communities.

All children should be able to grow up and thrive in their families and their neighborhoods. But that is not what's happening. We have ample evidence from families sharing their lived experiences and research that racism is harming lives. Our systems were never created to allow everyone to live a violence free life, and racism is violence, and we need to change that now.

The wage gap, over representation of Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and Black people in the criminal justice system, household wealth gap, access to care, maternal mortality and infant well-being, and access to early learning programs and educational outcomes, are results of systemic racism in our state. Poverty is racism in action. It is generations of policies that put the welfare and wellbeing of white people above all others. Even in Hawai'i, the culture of white supremacy and the racist ideologies that follow are very much intact and have been since the overthrow of the Queen Lili'uokalani.

Eights states have made a declaration that racism is a public health crisis.¹ The evidence of racism is all around us yet we do not address it head on in our policy making.

For these reasons, HCAN Speaks! respectfully requests that your committee vote favorably on the resolution.

Kathleen Algire
Director of Early Learning and Health Policy

¹ American Public Health Association, <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health/racism-declarations>

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HCR 112

TO: Chair Rhoads, Vice-Chair Keohokalole, & Judiciary Committee

FROM: Aiga Burke
Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) Outreach Navigator

DATE: April 14, 2021 (9:30 AM)

Hawai'i Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) **supports** HCR 112, which declares racism as a public health crisis in Hawai'i. In May 2020, the American Public Health Association (APHA) [declared](#): "Racism is a longstanding systemic structure in this country that must be dismantled through brutally honest conversations, policy changes and practices." Since the death of George Floyd, [a number of states and local governments have declared that racism is a public health crisis](#).

Unfortunately, this measure does not specifically point to white supremacy as a key source of the dispossession and maltreatment of those impacted by structural racism, including Native Hawaiians and other non-whites. White supremacy in Hawai'i also impacts its large Filipinx population, which struggles with longstanding economic and health disparities, [exacerbated during this ongoing pandemic period](#), and remains underrepresented in Hawai'i's elected bodies and learned professions.

This hearing comes the week after a [new report](#) from UH Mānoa disclosed that [public school students who are Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Black, or disabled are subject to encounters with law enforcement at significantly disproportionate rates](#). The report also notes that Hawai'i leads the country in terms of students arrested and referred to law enforcement at almost 10%.

That ***one in ten*** K-12 students in Hawai'i's public schools are referred to law enforcement is a crisis that demands concerted attention at every level of government. On this front and others, ***the Legislature must lead the way*** toward a more just, equitable, and compassionate future for every person who resides in this archipelago.

Among the health disparities faced by Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander populations are [higher rates of HIV, sexually transmitted infections, and tuberculosis than the general population](#) and higher rates of chronic diseases that include diabetes, heart disease, obesity and asthma. [COVID-19 has hit Marshallese and other Micronesians residents in Hawaii especially hard](#), with state health authorities being less than proactive in providing needed language-appropriate health information through at least the first six months of the pandemic.

Income is the most important determinant of health, with those living in poverty having less access to routine medical care, higher rates of chronic diseases, and shortened life expectancies. Poverty reinforces the accumulation of [adverse childhood experiences correlating with unfavorable health outcomes](#) in adulthood.

[Hawaii's poverty rate prior to the pandemic was just over 11% of the total population, with substantially higher percentages among Native Hawaiians \(15.5%\), Samoans \(20.4%\), Tongans \(16.2%\), Marshallese \(51.1%\), Vietnamese \(18%\), and Native Americans \(18.1%\)](#). Hawaii should recalibrate its tax structure through measures like those advanced by the [Hawaii Tax Fairness Coalition](#) in order help ensure that downturns in state and local tax revenues do not fall the hardest on those who are already below the poverty line. Notably, Hawaii also continues to have the lowest property taxes in the nation. Its current minimum wage of \$10.10 ranks below Arkansas, Arizona, New Mexico, District of Columbia, and U.S. Virgin Islands.

Native Hawaiians continue to be disproportionately impacted by Hawaii's criminal legal system, as has been the case since the late 19th Century. [Native Hawaiians are more likely to get a prison sentence, and for longer periods of time, than other groups. Native Hawaiians comprise the highest percentage of those incarcerated in out-of-state and women's prisons. Native Hawaiians are sentenced to longer probation terms than other groups. Native Hawaiians also bear a disproportionate burden of the punitive response to drug use, with sentencing structures, police practices, and prosecutorial practices contributing to that disproportionality.](#)

It is imperative that Hawaii embark on concerted responses to drug use that are grounded in public health, including harm reduction services and appropriate medical care, and not maintain its overreliance on placing individuals with behavioral health problems in jail or prison,

which is latently injurious to individual health, and prolonged periods of criminal legal supervision that include probation and parole.

Current punitive responses to drug use constitute white supremacy and structural racism in ignominious operation. This includes the classification of personal drug possession and use *in any amount* as felonious “promotion of a dangerous drug” under HRS Section 712-1243, punishable by a prison term of five years.

The preface to a 2018 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report, “[Mass Incarceration Threatens Health Equity in America](#),” outlines the perilous human toll of over-incarceration:

Mass incarceration disproportionately impacts lower-income communities, communities of color, and persons with disabilities, creating a barrier to achieving health equity. People who are incarcerated face greater chances for chronic health conditions, both while confined and long after their release. Incarceration exposes people to a wide range of conditions, such as poor sanitation and ventilation and solitary confinement, that are detrimental to long-term physical and mental health. After release, previously incarcerated individuals often face higher mortality rates and experience limited opportunities for gainful employment, stable housing, education, and other conditions needed for good health.

Mass incarceration’s reach extends far beyond the jail cell, impacting not only those behind bars, but their families, their communities, and the entire nation. Almost 10 million children have experienced having one or both parents incarcerated at some point in their lives—impacting their health and future opportunities. Within communities, mass incarceration disrupts social and family networks and economic development while across the country it consumes large portions of government budgets with negligible impact on crime rates.

The high individual, familial, and governmental costs associated with consigning persons with behavioral health problems to protracted involvement in the criminal legal system are readily apparent to those familiar with assessing punitive responses to drug use at the state, national, and international levels.

[The APHA vigorously endorses a public health response to drug use and misuse, including the decriminalization of personal drug possession and use. It urges state governments to eliminate “criminal penalties and collateral sanctions for personal drug use and possession offenses and to avoid unduly harsh administrative penalties, such as civil asset forfeiture...”](#)

As noted recently by a report from the Pew Charitable Trusts, [Hawai'i has the highest average term of probation in the nation at just under five years](#). Statewide probation reform that substantially reduces terms is another tangible means of repairing the harm of white supremacy and structural racism that are manifest in the operation of the state's criminal legal system.

This resolution laudably evinces an awareness that structural racism is a problem in Hawai'i. From that awareness should flow a slate of policy changes, including statutory revisions, that materially improve the lives of Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, African Americans, and others who are impacted by white supremacy and structural racism. Placing the brakes on the overcriminalization of these populations, including those who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability, and instead providing needed attention, care, and services is paramount.

In short, the corrosive legacy and ongoing deleterious impact of white supremacy and structural racism in our state cannot be adequately addressed without substantial reorientation of state and local policies and practices related to the criminalization of behavioral health problems.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this measure.



HIPHI Board

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Pediatrics

Rachel Novotny,
PhD, RDN, LD
University of Hawaii at Manoa,
College of Tropical Agriculture
and Human Resources

Garret Sugai
Kaiser Permanente

Date: April 13, 2021

To: Senator Karl Rhoads, Chair
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice Chair
Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee

Re: Support for HCR 112, Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis

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

The Hawai'i Public Health Instituteⁱ **supports HCR 112**, which declares racism as a public health crisis.

The events of 2020 saw widespread acknowledgement of racism as a public health crisis, and greater understanding of the influence of social determinants of health on Hawaii's communities. We believe these events are an opportunity for us to confront these issues directly, to act in unity to rethink our priorities, invest in a just society, and a safe and healthy future.

HIPHI strives to eliminate racism, disparities and injustices to improve the health and wellness of all people. For us, this translates to moving beyond advocating *for* equity, but rather amplifying our work *against* inequity. This means calling out the systemic discrimination that continues to drive poor health outcomes in Hawai'i and actively working to change this narrative. This is why we work to end the sale of all flavored tobacco products, including menthol. This is why we oppose policies that penalize use for the possession, use, or purchase of tobacco products. This is why we advocate to invest revenue from a sugary drink tax into the communities most affected by them. This is why we support restoring dental benefits for adult Medicaid enrollees.

All of us are called to rise to the challenge: to determine how we interrogate deeply-held beliefs and entrenched systems, and move forward with action and purpose. We commend the legislature for recognizing that racism is a public health crisis and look forward to working with the legislature on policies that work towards a more equitable, healthy future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HCR 112.

Mahalo,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jessica Yamauchi'.

Jessica Yamauchi, MA
Executive Director

ⁱ Hawai'i Public Health Institute is a hub for building healthy communities, providing issue-based advocacy, education, and technical assistance through partnerships with government, academia, foundations, business, and community-based organizations.

HCR112

Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis

SUPPORT

Senate Committee on Judiciary

April 14, 2021

Aloha e Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

Mahalo for hearing this important resolution that would declare racism as a public health crisis. I submit this testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of HCR112. Hawai‘i is behind, in comparison to many other states and cities to make such a declaration, but this resolution skillfully includes many best practices that includes (1) a clear definition of racism, (2) the acknowledgment of Hawai‘i’s unique history that provides the opportunity for truth and reconciliation, and (3) the adoption of a Hawai‘i-based, culturally-based, health justice framework.¹

Centering Hawai‘i to Clearly Define Racism in Hawai‘i

While many advocates see this resolution as long overdue, I particularly appreciate and commend this resolution centering Hawai‘i and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the landscape of how racism operationalizes in Hawai‘i. Hawai‘i’s unique history, generational trauma, and experience with racism warrants a Hawai‘i-centered, Hawai‘i-specific description of how racism impacts its people, particularly Native Hawaiians. Further, the impacts of racism are often missing, or discussed minimally, in the national discourse. This resolution provides a much needed Hawai‘i-centered perspective while also providing a tailored, Hawai‘i-based response to address and dismantle racism.

Acknowledging Hawai‘i’s Unique History towards Truth & Reconciliation

This resolution would provide needed acknowledgment, and opportunities towards reconciliation that is important for my life’s mission towards improving Native Hawaiian health through ‘āina justice and advocacy. As the resolution notes, racism operationalizes across various social determinants of health. While there are various noteworthy existing Hawai‘i efforts that calls for equity in education and health, there is a lack of acknowledgment of racism, let alone racism as a social determinant of health. Without acknowledging the role of racism as a social determinant of health, we will continue to fall short in truly achieving reconciliation or equitable justice.

In addition to acknowledging racism as a social determinant of health, the following passage further illustrates the ways in which institutionalized racism operates:

A useful concept for understanding this legacy is that of “institutionalized racism” put forward by Dr. Camara Jones. Jones defines institutionalized racism as “differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by race. **Institutionalized racism is normative, sometimes legalized, and often**

¹ The Network for Public Health Law, DECLARATIONS OF RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS: UTILIZING DECLARATIONS TO ADDRESS HEALTH INEQUITIES 17 (2021).

manifests as inherited disadvantage. It is structural, having been codified in our institutions of custom, practice, and law, so there need not be an identifiable perpetrator. Indeed, institutionalized racism is often evident as inaction in the face of need.” **Institutionalized racism causes unhealthy neighborhoods by systematically starving certain communities of access to key social goods, such as education, health care, adequate housing, recreational amenities, etc., thereby directly creating adverse social and physical environments within these communities.**²

This fundamental acknowledgment and understanding is necessary to recognize the problem. It is through acknowledging racism as a social determinant of health, and how institutionalized racism operates through policies and laws, and then result with unhealthy neighborhoods that gets us closer to dismantling institutionalized racism.

Hawai‘i’s Unique History Warrants a Hawai‘i-Based, Culturally-Based Health Justice Framework

Hawai‘i’s unique history and the unique impacts of racism on Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders further gives rise for a culturally-based, Hawai‘i-based health justice framework to remedy and dismantle institutionalized racism as the resolution prescribes. Hawai‘i researchers further affirm the need for a Hawai‘i-based, culturally-based approach to address racism here in Hawai‘i.³ While inclusion of communities that have been disparately impacted by racism is necessary, we must also acknowledge the white supremacist structures in which they are being integrated. The adoption of a health justice framework would not only address Hawai‘i’s unique situation, but also go beyond inclusion with addressing the very structures and systems in which we perpetuate, are upheld in equity.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HCR112. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify.

Aloha ‘āina,

Sharde Mersberg Freitas, Esq., MPH

² Hofrichter, Richard, TACKLING HEALTH INEQUITIES THROUGH PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTICE: A HANDBOOK FOR ACTION 124 (2006).

³ Kaholokula J.K., Miyamoto R.E.S., Hermosura A.H., Inada M. (2020) Prejudice, Stigma, and Oppression on the Behavioral Health of Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders. In: Benuto L., Duckworth M., Masuda A., O'Donohue W. (eds) Prejudice, Stigma, Privilege, and Oppression. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35517-3_7

HCR112 TESTIMONY

April 14, 2021

HCR112 DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS Senate Committee on Judiciary

Aloha e Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

Fa'afetai tele for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of HCR112, a resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis. This resolution, according to many advocates and particularly for communities most impacted by racism, is long overdue as the role of racism as a public health crisis has been long established and documented.

My name is Tina Tauasosi-Posiulai and I work at University of Hawaii at Manoa as a program staff. I've been advocating for visibility and voice of Pacific Islanders (PI) at University of Hawaii (UH) since early 2000. Although part of my job is to administer college educational outreach programs for PI youth and community, I was not given a budget while other programs focused on Filipino, other Asian groups, and Native Hawaiians all have student success programs funded by all of our tax payers money. In late 2015, I sought funding from UH community colleges (UHCC) to establish the Pasefika Passion Pipeline (3P) program, and worked closely with UHCC campuses on Oahu. 3P employed more than 10 UH-PI college students as peer mentors, tutors, and role models to support PI youth in public schools. Despite the success of 3P in supporting PI high school seniors to pursue post-secondary education, UH chose to defund 3P in May 2020 blaming the pandemic and lack of funding.

College education is key to success in life, unfortunately UH fails to extend its support to the PI community. UH continues to fund student success programs that focus on Filipino, other Asian groups, as well as Native Hawaiians. Such discrimination and injustice will continue to negatively impact PI youth and community. We refused to be treated as second class citizens and we continue to address such bias and discrimination against PI by submitting a proposal, in May 2020, to UH president, UH Manoa provost, and the Design Team to establish a Center for the Advancement of PI (CAPI). It is important to note that UH has established college readiness programs that specifically focus on Filipino and Native Hawaiian students for over four decades now. Operation Manong was established in 1971 which birthed many student success programs that focus largely on Filipino and Asian students. Also, Native Hawaiians (NH) established a center for NH students to support student success. Sadly, for PI youth and its people that mostly live in poverty, UH and the state of Hawaii continue to ignore and discriminate against PI youth and therefore create barriers for PI youth to achieve and succeed in postsecondary education.

The UH and state legislature must institute new ways to support PI youth and community and dismantle policies and practices that harm PI people. Hawai'i is not immune nor void of racism. In fact, Hawaii is the first place and only place I have experienced discrimination, racism, and bias just because of my ethnic identity. PI people will continue to live in poverty and endure poor health conditions and its youth being overcrowded in the criminal system, unless structural racism is dismantled and replaced with well-funded student success programs run by PI professionals who understand PI cultural values and practices that will empower and motivate youth and parents to pursue learning in post-secondary education.

Data shows that social determinants of health, such as poverty and food insecurity, are increasingly recognized as critical drivers of health inequities. The disproportionate vulnerability of PI people to COVID-19 is largely related to poor access to quality education, underrepresentation in college education, lack of medical insurance, limited employment opportunities to jobs that pay a living wage, inability to understand English, etc. Many PI youth who graduated from public school are ill-prepared to pursue college education and therefore discouraged them from pursuing. The UH and State legislature must address structural racism to ensure that the PI community will have access to quality education that is already enjoyed by other races and ethnic communities in Hawaii nei.

For these reasons, I urge the Committee to **PASS** HCR112 Fa'afetai tele for the opportunity to testify.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/8/2021 2:16:37 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Victoria Anderson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Please pass this important resolution.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/8/2021 8:07:41 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Christopher Hendrickson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am in strong support of HCR112.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/8/2021 9:27:43 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Gerard Silva	Individual	Oppose	No

Comments:

There is NO Public Health CRISIS pertaining to Race other than the ONE You are trying to Make up and We the People will not stand for this Bullshit any Longer. Stop trying to Divided the people of Hawaii. There is no Race problem here and if you cause this to happen we will be coming for YOU!!

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/9/2021 2:17:28 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Nadia Fale	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

My name is Nadia Fale and I am a resident of Kā• ne'ōhe, O'ahu. I would like to express my support for the bill HRC112 Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis. Racism throughout our community is a growing concern as it negatively affects our residents physically, mentally and spiritually. Racism has tainted systems that are meant to protect and uplift our people. I support this bill as it would be the first step in a long commitment of healing our community.

Mahalo,

Nadia Fale

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/9/2021 6:28:26 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Courtney Mrowczynski	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly **SUPPORT** HCR112.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/9/2021 8:25:09 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
kalena Charlene Holani	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

THIS TRULY IS THE ROOT OF ALL CULTURAL EXCINCTION IF WE GET HCR112 PASSED WE TRULY CAN SAVE HAWAII AND HAWAIIANS AND ALL INDIGENOUS/ABORIGINALS FROM EVER BEING ERASED AND FORGOTEN.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/10/2021 11:34:43 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Jen Jenkins	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair and Honorable Members,

Please pass HCR112 in recognition that racism is a public health crisis.

Mahalo,

Jen J.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/10/2021 1:41:00 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Dante Carpenter	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Chair Sen. Rhoads, Vice-Chair Sen. Keohokalole, and Committee Members:

I am in full support of ***HCR 112/HR 90 - Racism is a Public Health Crisis.***

As the state with the highest ratio of ethnicities in the United States, it is incumbent on our Political Leaders in every County and throughout the State of Hawai'i, to be cognizant of Racism in its many forms, and to insure that it is never allowed to be practiced in any form in Hawai'i!

In sum, the state's policy should be cast in stone, and that there is a need to adopt a Hawai'i-based, cuturally-based, health justice framework that will combat any continuation of racism with policymaking while concurrently promoting racial equity.

Mahalo a nui loa,

Dante Carpenter

Former Elected County and State Officeholder

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/11/2021 9:04:03 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
katie ranke	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this bill and whatever can be done to name and end racism.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 9:02:00 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Sanford Yee	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I urge you to pass HCR112.

Transition to a more effective and sustainable correctional model that focuses on rehabilitation rather than punishment.

and

2. Adopt a comprehensive strategy to address the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in the criminal justice and correctional systems.

Mahalo!

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 9:33:12 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Olan Leimomi Fisher	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I **strongly support** HCR112. In addition to acknowledging the need for equity, we must also recognize the racism as a public health crisis. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders have been, and continue to be, uniquely impacted by racism that is ultimately resulting in poorer health outcomes as substantiated across various social determinants of health – in the criminal justice system, housing, education, health care, and employment. Please **PASS** this measure. Mahalo!

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 10:41:58 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
tlaloc tokuda	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear JDC Chair, Vice Chair and committee members,

My mother and father's family were put in concentration camps during the war, my father didn't go to 'camp' because he was already in the 442. Almost no one spoke up for the Japanese American's. Not even the ACLU (only one field officer from the San Francisco office did), as well as many Quakers...

- Being silent in the face of wrongdoing is not an option; it is tacit cooperation and being complicit.
- We need to dismantle all forms of racism at all levels and its impacts.
- Let us not forget the words of Pastor Martin Neimöller:

First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out— because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

- We all need to reject and call out racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination, or hate crimes against all Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), including women.

Please pass this bill out of committee.

Mahalo for your consideration,

Tlaloc Tokuda

Kailua Kona HI 96740

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 10:52:08 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Shannon Rudolph	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Support

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 11:10:20 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Tetine Sentell	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

This testimony is in support of HCR112 to recognize racism as a public health crisis in the state of Hawai'i.

This is an urgent issue with impacts made even more visible in the time of COVID-19. This is so important that, in the last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the nation's leading public health agency, declared that racism is a serious threat to the public's health. They have established a web portal to serve as a hub for their activities and to promote a public discourse on how racism negatively affects health and communicate potential solutions: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthequity/racism-disparities/index.html>

As the American Public Health Association (APHA) notes: "Across the country, local and state leaders are declaring racism a public health crisis or emergency. These declarations are an important first step in the movement to advance racial equity and justice and must be followed by allocation of resources and strategic action." <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health/racism-declarations>

Hawai'i is not even visible on the APHA map on this critical issue.

I am writing as a private citizen for this testimony. I serve as a professor at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and Chair of the Office of Public Health Studies in the Thompson School of Social Work and Public Health. The mission of the Office of Public Health Studies is to advance the health of the peoples of Hawai'i, the nation, and the Asia-Pacific region through knowledge, discovery, innovation, engagement, inclusion, and leadership. Understanding the impact that racism and discrimination have on public health from policies, systems, and interpersonal relationships is an important area of action and scholarship with much work remaining to untangle these impacts and to build meaningful solutions.

For the Hawai'i legislature to recognize the urgency of this matter and begin work to address the impact of systemic and institutionalized racism in laws, policies, and political and social structures are important steps for community wellbeing and better public health.

Aloha for your time and consideration of this important issue.

TO: COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

FROM: Wendy Gibson-Viviani RN/BSN

RE: HCR112 Racism as a Public Health Crisis (In Support)

HEARING : Wednesday, April 14, 2021 at 9:30 a.m Via Videoconference

Dear Chair Senator Karl Rhoads, Vice-Chair, Senator Jarrett Keohokalole and Members of the Committee,

My name is Wendy Gibson-Viviani R.N. and I am an active member of the American Cannabis Nurses Association and the Cannabis Nurses Network. Both of these groups are well aware that **racism has created a systematic disparity of treatment** of Indigenous communities and people of color in many areas of society, including the criminal justice and health care systems.

We have seen the collateral damage done by the violent, racist War on Drugs--mainly by criminalizing possession of marijuana—as evidenced by the **mass incarceration of hundreds of thousands of people** each year. For decades, we have witness larger numbers of people of color killed, arrested, incarcerated and retained in the criminal justice system.—than other “races”. The rates are higher for people of color than for Caucasians. although people of color make up a smaller percentage of the population.

Indigenous people have been traumatized (for generations) by colonialism, ensuring oppression in every fiber of the fabric of society. What happened in Hawaii is just one example of an area that experienced the damaging effects of colonialism and the resulting poorest health outcomes.

I support HCR112 because I believe that:

- The social disparities that lead to the over-representation of Kanaka Maoli and Pacific Islanders in the criminal legal system must be addressed
- The state should not inflict further harm on struggling communities that are most impacted by incarceration, underfunded schools, poor health and a lack of services.
- Mutual respect for Hawaiian values should be woven into all government policies

I agree that we need to recognize the influence that racism has on public health, just as has been recognized by the World Health Organization, Judiciary, Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women, Papa Ola LOKahi, 'Ahahui o Na Kauka, Imua Alliance, Community Alliance on Prisons, American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i, Hawai'i Public Health Institute, American Heart Association, Hawaii Health and Harm Reduction Center, Hawaii Public Health Association, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Director, Dr Rochelle Walensky.

Source NPR/CDC Director Declares Racism a Serious Public Health Threat.

<https://www.npr.org/2021/04/08/985524494/cdc-director-declares-racism-a-serious-public-health-threat>.

According to a report from the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), **racism has led to disparities in treatment and racial oppression in addiction medicine**. ASAM president, Paul H Earley, MD said that "For too long, structural, political and cultural biases have failed racially oppressed people. In an affront to basic human rights, this has extended into healthcare as well."

The answers lie in confronting the role that racism has played in all aspects of healthcare which include the criminal justice system.

We can start with reimagining our criminal justice system, **moving away from a mass criminalization model and moving towards health and human services**, housing, education, rehabilitation and restorative justice.

Hawai'i Correctional System Oversight Commission, 2020 Annual Report and recommendations (from December 2020) makes me hopeful that we have tools to use going forward. The report can be found at: <https://ag.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/HCSOC-Final-Report.pdf>.

Implementing the recommendations of the HCR 85 Correctional Reform Task Force is a great place to start. They provide researched and evidence-based recommendations for reforming our criminal justice system and public health outcomes.

Please support the passage of HCR112 to bring this important crisis into view and provide a pathway to racial justice resolutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

Wendy Gibson-Viviani RN/BSN
Kailua Resident
Oahu Resident for 30 years.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 12:58:03 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Barbara Best	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

We know there are iniquities resulting from racism. It is commendable that this bill is concerned.

Mahalo

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 2:39:55 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Edward B Hanel Jr	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

The disparate impacts of poor education, inferior medical care, and unemployment rates on minorities are an indication of a fundamental and longstanding barrier to accessing the American Dream. HCR112 is needed to explore that barrier and develop the means to overcome it. Recommend passing HCR112.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 3:08:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Carla Allison	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

My name is Carla Allison and I strongly support HCR112. The social disparities that lead to the over-representation of Kanaka Maoli and Pacific Islanders in the criminal legal system must be addressed. It is time for Hawaii to stop inflicting further harm on the struggling communities that are most impacted by incarceration, underfunded schools, poor health, lack of services, etc. Our state can and must weave Hawaiian values and mutual respect for all people into all government policies and practices. Please support HCR112.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 6:21:42 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
laurie boyle	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha,

I support hcr112 for the simple reason that we must better understand how we can reduce the institutionalized racism throughout our government, companies, neighborhoods and families to prevent loss of life, health, wages, dignity and Aloha.

Mahalo for your attention.

HCR 112 - DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

SENATOR KARL RHOADES, CHAIR

SENATOR JARRETT KEOHOKALOLE, VICE CHAIR

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14, 2021

VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

9:30 AM

Dear Chair Rhoades, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **HCR 112**,
Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis.

My name is Haley Helton, and I am an undergraduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at
Mānoa.

This resolution would declare racism as a public health crisis, as well as provide methods to
dismantle racism through education, and adopting a Hawai‘i based, culturally-based health
justice framework.

Racism is pervasive and it exists in all aspects of life. From housing, healthcare, employment,
education, food access, and more, racism is prevalent. Racism is the root of many social,
economic, and educational disparities that lead to health outcome disparities and shorter life
expectancies for Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Racism has existed as a public health
crisis for a very long time, and I feel that this resolution is long overdue. However, the
COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the nature of these pre-existing inequities caused by
systemic racism. In Hawai‘i, Kānaka Maoli and Pacific Islanders have faced disproportionate
rates of COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations, and structural racism is the core of this
problem. In Hawai‘i, as of summer 2020, sixteen percent of Hawai‘i’s COVID-19 deaths were
non-Hawaiian Pacific Islanders who comprise only four percent of the population, and
twenty-four percent of Hawai‘i’s COVID-19 deaths were from the Filipino community who
comprise only sixteen percent of the population. In America, as of late July 2020, Black people,
who make up approximately thirteen percent of the U.S. population, accounted for a quarter of
COVID-19 deaths in America. The COVID-19 pandemic has had disproportionate effects on
communities of color, and these examples are only a few out of very many that support this fact.

Since 2019, policymakers from more than fifty American municipalities and three states have
formally classified racism as a public health crisis. This resolution implores the state of Hawai‘i
to follow in their footsteps and declare racism as a public health crisis. This declaration would be

a phenomenal starting point, but it would then be crucial that the state government address how systemic racism plays a role in its policies and programs, and to then take the correct steps in ensuring that racism is addressed in promoting racial equity. However, I want to emphasize that declarations of this sort are an instrumental step in combating all forms of racism and eliminating White Supremacy. They force policymakers to address systems and structures of oppression. This bill decides the humanity of people of color. And it is relevant to everyone in the state of Hawai‘i, regardless of skin color. All of us must stand in solidarity as we support and protect people of color in making racism a public health crisis.

Please support HCR 112.

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 7:19:05 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Comments	No

Comments:

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and Committee on the Judiciary,

I am submitting comments on HCR 112.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the racial inequities and barriers to healthcare and health service. Those who have lower paying, public facing jobs and live in multigenerational housing are more likely to contract and spread COVID-19.

It is important for our state government to acknowledge these racial inequities and work to remove the barriers to healthcare and health service. If not, the pandemic will linger and continue to breed viral mutations which may be more contagious and more deadly to the entire population. The scientist don't know how long the current versions of the COVID-19 vaccine will be effective against the newer viral mutations.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a public health treat to all. The harsh reality is that those with less or no resources/assets, social economic status, health insurance, stable housing and work opportunity with little to no protection against the virus are more vulnerable to financial fall out, infection, death and all loss of hope. Racism plays into these systemic disparities. We need to identify meaningful, long lasting solutions to racism here in Hawaii.

I don't know if declaring racism as a public health crisis is appropriate because the impacts of racism is so much broader than public health. Racism negatively impacts educational opportunities, housing, early childhood education, job opportunities, voting, and so much more.

Thank you for taking the time to review this issue. I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments on HCR112.

Mahalo,

Caroline Kunitake

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 7:31:28 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
donn viviani	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support passage of HCR112. The first step in addressing a problem is recognizing that there is a problem. That racial discrimination has caused excess mortality and morbidity in minority populations is manifest. Please take the first step and pass this bill.

Donn Viviani, Kailua

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/12/2021 10:44:21 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Martina Kamaka	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha kakou, My name is Dr. Martina Kamaka and I am family physician and a faculty member who teaches medical students. Please support HCR112. This resolution represents an important step our state leadership can take in the fight to end not only health disparities but also social and economic disparities. Racism, including more subtle forms such as implicit bias and structural racism, all play an important roles in perpetuating the inequities in our society. The CDC just last week declared racism as a public health threat. Hawaii has always prided itself as being at the forefront of many equity related issues, and here is the chance to lend our support to this national conversation and actually do something to make a difference. By recognizing the role of racism in perpetuating disparities and naming it as a public health crisis, we can more easily impact needed policy changes, teaching curriculum, resources and even public opinion. Naming it as a public health crisis will be a powerful tool in our joint striving for equity and social justice for all the people of Hawaii and model it for the rest of the country and the world. Mahalo for supporting this important measure.

Aloha, Martina Kamaka, MD

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 6:02:35 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Linda Morgan	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support HCR112. As the librarian at Na'alehu Elementary School, I have observed the damaging effect of racism directed at Marshallese students. Though many of these students are both bright and talented, most lack self confidence. Being discriminated against affects their self images. Please support HCR112 to help stop racism.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 7:37:30 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
David Anderson	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Being silent in the face of wrongdoing is not an option; it is tacit cooperation and being complicit.

We need to dismantle all forms of racism at all levels and its impacts.

We all need to reject and call out racism, xenophobia, intolerance, discrimination, or hate crimes against all Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC), including women.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of this resolution.

ROBERT K. MERCE
2467 Aha Aina Place
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96821
(808) 398-9594

TO: Committee on Judiciary
RE: HCR 112
HEARING DATE: Wednesday, April 14, 2021
TIME: 9:35 a.m.
CONF. Via Videoconference
POSITION: Strongly Support

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Jarrett Keohokalole, and Members of the Committee:

The fact of systemic racism in Hawaii is beyond dispute. It is a thread that runs through Hawaiian history from 1778 to the present and is well-documented in books, articles, reports, studies, and dissertations.

Government inaction to combat racism is also crystal clear. In 2012 the Native Hawaiian Justice Task Force issued a report that included 48 findings and 38 recommendations on steps the State and the Department of Public Safety should take to address the disparate treatment of Native Hawaiians in the criminal justice system, but to my knowledge, none of the recommendations have been implemented. Likewise, the recommendations of the HCR 85 Task Force on Prison Reform regarding the overrepresentation of Native Hawaiians in the criminal justice system have been totally ignored, and the State has thus far disregarded the recommendations of the Hawaii Correctional System Oversight Commission with regard to building a 1380-bed jail that would continue to incarcerate a disproportional number of Native Hawaiians.

HCR 112 is an important resolution. It deserves to be passed and followed.

Thank you for allowing me to testify on HCR 112.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 8:27:03 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Carolyn Eaton	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha, my name is Carolyn Eaton, and I am an Oahu voter in strong support of HCR 112.

The amazing declaration by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs not long ago in impassioned support of African American and other immigrant people in our community must lead us to work tirelessly for easing the array of struggles faced by marginalized people in Hawai'i. The fact that the Hawaiian people themselves are chief among the struggling populations is abominable. Please seize this opportunity to inject humanity, compassion and best practices into our criminal legal system. The recommendations of HCR 85 should be re-examined and adopted. The roadmap exists, in large part.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 9:04:39 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Terina Fa'agau	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I STRONGLY SUPPORT this measure. Please pass HCR112 that declares racism as a public health crisis. Acknowledging as much is just a first but necessary step toward racial equity for Hawaii's people.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 9:14:58 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Allen Freese	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I am writing in support of this measure to declare racism as a public health crisis. For many people, it has not been until the high-profile police killings of individuals like George Floyd and most recently Daunte Wright that the racial disparities in the way individuals experience life in the US have become more obvious. In Hawaii in particular, many people like to characterize the islands as a place where racism is not an issue, as the racial injustices which frequently occur on the continent seem to be more or less absent here. However, the recent police shooting of a 16 year old COFA migrant in Honolulu has highlighted the fact that we also experience our own brand of racism in Hawaii.

Whether it is anti-Black or anti-Latinx racism on the continent, or anti-Micronesian racism here in the islands, racism is indeed a public health crisis. Not only do law-enforcement encounters disproportionately turn to violence when the subject is not white, but racism has also been at the root of countless murders among civilians, including the murder of Ahmaud Arbery and the mass-shooting at Asian spas, both of which happened in Georgia. Anti-Asian sentiment has also been on the rise in the wake of COVID-19, with many videos coming to light which show disturbing cases of violence against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, several of whom were elderly.

If this kind of violence is to end, then its root must be identified, which is precisely what this measure aims to achieve. Once racism has been identified and clearly defined, action can be taken to remove it from our national culture. I hope you will take this opportunity to declare that racism is not acceptable in our communities and that it does indeed represent a serious public health crisis.

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 9:20:43 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Kavika Puahi	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I strongly support this bill as it has become more evident that racism is playing a critical role in the handling of public health issues. This is not only evident in the handling of the pandemic but also in the disproportionate health impact being felt by ethnic groups across the nation. It is imperative that we change the narrative and begin to remove racist elements and policies from the public health arena.

Thank you!

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 9:28:36 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Diana Bethel	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chairman Rhoads, Vice-Chair Senator Keohokalole, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing in strong support of HCR112 which declares that racism is a public health crisis.

The COVID-19 virus has brought into bold relief the systemic racial/wealth biases causing the disparities among racial groups especially in health as well as in other sectors.

Following the former police chief's assertion that racial bias isn't "as bad" as on the continental U.S., she nonetheless refused to be transparent about the data that would help focus areas for improvement.

Focusing on the criminal justice system, it is unclear if the legislature and the Department of Public Safety recognize that jails and prisons are not insulated from the general public, but that people come and go from them into the larger community. Any disregard of COVID-19 transmission within congregate settings is a public health threat to the public at large. In this sense, the lack of concern for Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders who are overrepresented in our prisons and jails reveals a clear example of systemic racism that endangers everyone who lives in Hawaii.

With HCR 112, the Legislature has the opportunity to lead the discussion and show that it is not oblivious or indifferent to the systemic racism that exists in Hawaii. It will also show that legislators take the problem seriously and will be proactive in addressing it.

Mahalo,

Diana Bethel, Honolulu



HAWAII APPLESEED

CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

LATE

Testimony of the Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice
In Support of HCR 112 – DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.
Committee on Judiciary
Wednesday, April 14, 2021, 9:30 AM, Via Videoconference

Dear Chair Rhoads, Vice Chair Keohokalole, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HCR112**, Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis.

HCR112 will begin a process of healing from the consequences of continued racism and historical trauma from the colonization of Hawai'i. This resolution:

- affirms that the right to the highest attainable standard of health is a fundamental human right;
- recognizes that racism is a social determinant of health and influences the public health of marginalized peoples;
- identifies root causes of racism in Hawai'i, namely the colonization of the Native Hawaiian people;
- commits our state to address systemic racism by dismantling all forms of racism at all levels, especially its impacts on the delivery and implementation of human and social services, economic development, health care, and public safety; and
- directs our state utilize a Hawai'i-based, culturally-based, health justice framework that will further combat the continuation of racism with policymaking while also promoting racial equity.

Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law & Economic Justice works to change systems that perpetuate injustice and inequality in order to build a more socially and economically just Hawai'i, where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve social and economic security and to fulfill their potential. **Symptoms of inequity include disproportionate rates for certain populations of poor health, financial insecurity, restricted social mobility, houselessness and incarceration.** In Hawai'i, the populations most impacted are Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders.

Racism is an explicit or implicit oppression of a group of people based on their race or ethnicity. Racism can be carried out by individuals, but most often it is a systemic, collective social phenomena expressed in laws, public policies, institutions of power, education and more. Racism is perpetuated through codified policies and ingrained narratives and beliefs that blame the oppressed group for the negative outcomes of systemic racism. **Racism privileges not only one race above all others, but also privileges one culture above all others,** discounting the legitimacy of the oppressed population's culture, thoughts, beliefs, and solutions.

The Hawai'i Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice is committed to a more socially just Hawai'i, where everyone has genuine opportunities to achieve economic security and fulfill their potential. We change systems that perpetuate inequality and injustice through policy development, advocacy, and coalition building.

In Hawai‘i, **the privileged culture is the western, American culture that gained superiority through colonization – a systematic dismantling of the population, culture, and sovereignty of the Native Hawaiian people through disease, coercion, and violence.** Westerners pushed for land privatization, which alienated the Native Hawaiian people from a keystone of their culture and allowed America to capture vast swaths of land upon annexation. Westerners overthrew the Hawaiian Kingdom and placed the American government and businessmen in power to subjugate and silence the Native Hawaiian people. Then, Americans protected their power by enacting policies that would dismantle elements and legitimacy of the Native Hawaiian culture, such as banning ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i in schools.

Although some may say colonization happened so long ago and is not relevant today, **many health professionals and scholars have attributed disproportionate burden of the physical and mental health conditions to the experience of historical trauma by Native Hawaiians.** Historical trauma is a type of trauma caused by the experience of a traumatic event or transgressions. It is cumulative and transgenerational in nature and causes psychological harm to an individual, group, or entire generation. These traumatic events and transgressions include interpersonal violence, displacement from traditional lands, cultural loss or degradation, compulsory acculturation strategies (e.g., banning of native language), and other forms of discrimination. The psychological consequences are depression, anxiety, anger, shame, grief, and social isolation.¹

Addressing racism and historical trauma is a public health imperative that must be sought today because it impacts so many Hawai‘i residents (e.g., over a third of Hawai‘i’s children under age 18 are part- or full-Native Hawaiian).² To do so, we can dig into the source of Hawai‘i’s racism – colonization – and trace its roots to the institutions, laws and policies perpetuating the racism. We can stem the consequences of racism by dismantling all its forms at all levels, especially its impacts on the delivery and implementation of human and social services, economic development, health care, and public safety.

As HCR112 directs the legislature, adopting a Hawai‘i-based, culturally-based, health justice framework to combat the continuation of racism in policymaking is vital because western centric policies have not fully addressed consequences of racism in the past. **Solutions based on the Native Hawaiian culture have been shown to build health, strength, and resiliency.** We can look to numerous Native Hawaiian serving organizations and programs for solutions. With a health justice framework, we can ensure all policies see health and protection from racism as human rights.

In Hawai‘i, other ethnic populations face discrimination, cultural loss and poverty too, notably immigrants and migrants from other Pacific nations, the Philippines and Southeast Asia. Fortunately, as byproduct of finding and addressing root causes of racism for Native Hawaiians, **we can dismantle racism for other marginalized peoples and offer a space for their cultural solutions to thrive.**

¹ Joseph Kaholokula, Scott Okamoto and Barbara Yee. “Advancing Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Health.” American Psychological Association, Asian American Journal of Psychology. 2019, Vol. 10, No. 3, 197-205

² U.S. Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Racism threatens the wellbeing and potential for all Hawai'i residents. We need a new commitment to combat systemic issues arising from racism. So, we urge the committee to **PASS HCR112**. We appreciate your consideration of this testimony.

LATE

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 10:28:03 AM
Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Maddalynn Sesepasara	Testifying for Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center	Support	No

Comments:

Hawaii Health & Harm Reduction Center (HHRC) supports HCR 112, which declares racism as a public health crisis in Hawaii. In May 2020, the American Public Health Association (APHA) declared: "Racism is a longstanding systemic structure in this country that must be dismantled through brutally honest conversations, policy changes and practices." Since the death of George Floyd, a number of states and local governments have declared that racism is a public health crisis.

Unfortunately, this measure does not specifically point to white supremacy as a key source of the dispossession and maltreatment of those impacted by structural racism, including Native Hawaiians and other non-whites. White supremacy in Hawaii also impacts its large Filipinx population, which struggles with longstanding economic and health disparities, exacerbated during this ongoing pandemic period, and remains underrepresented in Hawaii's elected bodies and learned professions.

This hearing comes the week after a new report from UH Mānoa disclosed that public school students who are Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, Black, or disabled are subject to encounters with law enforcement at significantly disproportionate rates. The report also notes that Hawaii leads the country in terms of students arrested and referred to law enforcement at almost 10%.

That one in ten K-12 students in Hawaii's public schools are referred to law enforcement is a crisis that demands concerted attention at every level of government. On this front and others, the Legislature must lead the way toward a more just, equitable, and compassionate future for every person who resides in this archipelago.

Mahalo,

Maddalynn Sesepasara

LATE



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SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Sen. Karl Rhoads, Chair
Sen. Jarrett Keohokalole, Vice-Chair

IN SUPPORT

HCR 112 - DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS.

Wednesday, April 14, 2021, 9:30 AM, Videoconference

Papa Ola Lokahi

is a non-profit Native Hawaiian organization founded in 1988 for the purpose of improving the health and well-being of Native Hawaiians and other native peoples of the Pacific and continental United States.

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Papa Ola Lōkahi, the Native Hawaiian Health Board established in 1988 to improve the health status of Native Hawaiians and their families, is in full support of the call for racism to be declared a public health crisis.

Whereas, the federal Native Hawaiian Health Care Act (Title 42 USC 122) was passed in 1988, and Papa Ola Lōkahi was established as a direct result of the decimation of the population due to foreign disease, colonization, cultural conflict, trauma, systemic and other injustices identified in the *Native Hawaiian Study Commission* (1983), the *E Ola Mau Native Hawaiian Health Needs Assessment* reports (1985), and numerous groundbreaking publications by Dr. Richard Kekuni Blaisdell, we uphold the importance of measures such as HCR112, which play the important role of calling attention to structural harms and social determinants of health that impact Native Hawaiians and others. There is a sizeable body of research that clearly links these factors, which may or may not be obvious or overt, to adverse clinical health outcomes.

We appreciate the language in the measure that demonstrates an understanding of maui ola (health) using ‘ike haole concepts, and that the connections between racism, colonization and the loss of self-determination for Native Hawaiians, impact the state of Native Hawaiian health today. We also appreciate the call for equity for the peoples of Hawai‘i, many of whom continue to face harms caused by racism.

The mission of Papa Ola Lōkahi is to improve the health status and well-being of Native Hawaiians and others by advocating for, initiating, and maintaining culturally appropriate strategic actions aimed at improving the physical, mental, and spiritual health of Native Hawaiians and their ‘ohana (families) and empowering them to determine their own destinies. This includes reducing harms at all levels and across all sectors. This can be achieved when we collectively identify and pursue the end of racism for Native Hawaiians and all who bear the burden from the widespread and deep harms caused by racism.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in **SUPPORT** of **HCR112**.

LATE

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 9:39:35 AM
Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Ona Lee	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

- The social disparities that lead to the over-representation of Kanaka Maoli and Pacific Islanders in the criminal legal system must be addressed
- The state should not inflict further harm on struggling communities that are most impacted by incarceration, underfunded schools, poor health, lack of services, etc.
- Mutual respect for all and Hawaiian values should be woven into all government policies

Racism is a Serious Public Health Threat says CDC director Dr Rochelle Walensky

LATE

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 12:11:17 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Viliami Tauatevalu	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

I support this measure that declares racism as a public health crisis. Intolerance and hate crimes are not new, what is new is the mass of people that refuse to sit in silence while these atrocity happens. I am very glad that Hawai'i is finally having these difficult discussions which clearly need to be addressed, and hope that this will be a building block for the next steps on what we as a state can do to address these serious issues.

LATE

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/13/2021 2:37:49 PM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Maile Tualii	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Racism is the fundamental cause of race inequities in health. There is scientific evidence which documents and describes the multiple ways in which racism adversely affects health. We can no longer sit idly by and witness health disparities in our communities. I support HCR112/HR90, which would declare racism as a public health crisis, and urge the State to commit to several actions to assist in the dismantling of racism in Hawai'i.

LATE

HCR-112

Submitted on: 4/14/2021 11:19:22 AM

Testimony for JDC on 4/14/2021 9:30:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Allison Jacobs	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Racism affects the health of our entire nation. Racism is not just the discrimination against one group based on the color of their skin or their race or ethnicity, but the structural barriers that impact racial and ethnic groups differently to influence where a person lives, where they work, where their children play, and where they worship and gather in community. These social determinants of health have life-long negative effects on the mental and physical health of individuals in communities of color.