

**Jointly Addressing Health Disparities in Response to COVID-19**

**and Other Potential Pandemics**

**Committee: Health Resolution: HEA-21-01**

1. **WHEREAS,** African Americans, Hispanic Americans and other people of color have
2. been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; and,
3. **WHEREAS,** a growing amount of data suggests that this is due to the well-known \
4. social determinants of health disproportionately affecting people of color in the United
5. States, the socioeconomic disadvantages, like wage disparities, racial disparities in
6. housing and decreased access to healthcare, including as a consequence of bias, that have
7. long affected their health outcomes; and,
8. **WHEREAS,** for example, African Americans have been more likely to be exposed to
9. COVID-19 because they are proportionally more likely to be, or to live with someone
10. considered to be, part of the essential workforce unable to work from home; and,
11. **WHEREAS,** African Americans disproportionately lack access to paid sick leave despite
12. their risk of exposure to COVID-19 in frontline jobs, this includes many essential
13. workers like food-delivery workers; and,
14. **WHEREAS,** people of color are more likely to live in densely populated areas and in
15. crowded living conditions including multigenerational housing situations, all of which
16. create a higher risk for the spread of highly contagious diseases like COVID-19; and,
17. **WHEREAS,** many urban African American and Latino families double- and triple-up in
18. homes when rent is unaffordable, thus making distancing in the home impossible; and,
19. **WHEREAS,** that includes caregivers, cashiers, sanitation workers, farm workers and
20. public transit employees; and,
21. **WHEREAS,** poor housing availability and violations of residential codes for asbestos,
22. mold and cockroaches increase the risk and prevalence of chronic respiratory and
23. pulmonary diseases.; and,
24. **WHEREAS,** economic inequality also impacts access to healthy foods, leading to other
25. chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes; and,
26. **WHEREAS,** known as comorbidities, many of those chronic diseases predispose to more
27. serious complications from COVID-19, a situation that is likely to recur in future
28. pandemics; and,
29. **WHEREAS,** for example, the Centers for Disease Control released information that
30. people with asthma may be at greater risk of dying from COVID-19; and,
31. **WHEREAS,** according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, compared to \
32. non-Hispanic whites, African Americans with asthma are nearly five times as likely to
33. visit the emergency department, an indication of poor asthma control[[1]](#footnote-0) that is likely \
34. affected by less access to healthcare; and,\
35. **WHEREAS,** despite bearing the brunt of the front-line work, African Americans still lost
36. jobs and income as as result of COVID-19 at a higher rate than other groups, with 44%
37. African Americans (and 61% Hispanics) reporting they or someone in their household
38. experienced a job or wage loss in the initial weeks of the pandemic, compared to 38% of
39. white adults;[[2]](#footnote-1) and,
40. **WHEREAS,** according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, by November 2020, over \
41. 2 million African Americans or 10.3 percent were unemployed, compared to 8.4 percent
42. for Hispanic/Latinos, 6.7 percent for Asians and 5.9 percent for whites;[[3]](#footnote-2) and,
43. **THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that the National Organization of Black Elected \
44. Officials - Women Legislators calls on lawmakers to ensure that all Americans have
45. access to affordable health care, portable benefits like paid sick leave and family leave,
46. and stronger protections from workplace hazards and discrimination, during and after the
47. pandemic; and,
48. **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** that we call on our organization to establish a **Task**
49. **Force on Racial Disparities** that will, (1) Study the root causes of health disparities
50. based on race that lead to comorbidity issues for communities of color to address the
51. impact of COVID-19 and recommend actions to address the social determinants that lead
52. to health disparities. (2) Identify metrics and measurable outcomes to tackle the issues of
53. health disparity; (Wage inequality, Access to care, Rising rents, Comorbidity, Social
54. determinants of health; (3) Recommend actions to increase transparency in reporting data
55. regarding the racial and ethnic impact of hypertension, cancers, asthma, COVID-19,
56. remove barriers to accessing physical and mental health care; (4) Identify ways to reduce
57. the impact of medical bias that lead to bias toward white patients over patients of color in
58. all areas in the delivery of health services ie. testing and treatment; (5) Create pathways
59. to solve the environmental and infrastructure factors contributing to increased exposure
60. during pandemics resulting in mortality; and develop and improve systems for supporting
61. long-term economic recovery and physical and mental health care following a pandemic;
62. (6) Conduct virtual and if and when possible in person meetings with stakeholders who
63. are are informed, educated, and empowered in impacted areas to identify and address
64. solutions. Stakeholder outreach will include, but is not limited to, community leaders,
65. partner organizations, tribal governments, local government officials, and other elected
66. officials representing the impacted areas; (7) Perform outreach to ensure the general
67. public is informed about racial disparities, social determinants of health are engaged and
68. empowered in the impact of COVID-19, and the work of the Task Force; (8) Identify
69. avenues of funding for combating health disparities in the impact of COVID-19; (9)
70. Recommend changes in state and federal laws relevant to combating racial disparities in
71. the impact of and response to pandemics; (10) Identify other issues and provide
72. recommendations on any other matters relevant to addressing racial disparities in the
73. impact of and response to pandemics.

**Introduced by The Honorable Kamia Brown**

**Florida House of Representatives**

1. Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. 2020 Asthma disparities in America, a roadmap to reducing burden on racial and ethnic minorities. www.aafa.org/asthmadisparities. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Pew Research Center [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)