WHEREAS, the World Health Organization identifies the right to health, defined as the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, as a fundamental human right, which must be enjoyed without discrimination on the grounds of race, age, ethnicity, or any other status; and

WHEREAS, racism's influence on public health has been recognized by the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health, Judiciary, Hawai'i State Commission on the Status of Women, Papa Ola Lōkahi, 'Ahahui o Nā Kauka, American Civil Liberties Union of Hawai'i, and many others; and

WHEREAS, Hawai'i's historical trauma caused by racism demonstrates that it is not immune to nor void of the existence and insidious ways in which racism operationalizes at institutional, systemic, and personal levels; and

WHEREAS, Native Hawaiians are the native people of Hawai'i and maintained a once thriving population estimated to be over one million inhabitants, whose land and resource management practices allowed them to live harmoniously with their environment; and

WHEREAS, the arrival of westerners caused a shift in this balance, resulting in colonization and the erosion and eventual loss of Native Hawaiian governance over Hawai'i's lands and resources; and

WHEREAS, the decimation of the Native Hawaiian population, the dispossession and disconnection of Native Hawaiians from
their lands, and the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom were motivated by foreign colonial motives that resulted in further historical injustices, systemic inequities, and subsequent racist policies favoring foreign colonizers that continue to impact the Native Hawaiian community; and

WHEREAS, a series of epidemics from foreign diseases in particular contributed significantly to the historic decline of the Native Hawaiian population and the generational trauma that Native Hawaiians are still healing from today; and

WHEREAS, the trauma caused by colonizers exacerbated historical injustices, perpetuated by western individuals and interests, led to the oppression of Native Hawaiian culture and people, the consequences of which Native Hawaiians continue to experience today; and

WHEREAS, the perpetuation of laws, policies, and political structures that have arisen from, and the continued failure to acknowledge and address, these historical injustices have resulted in the continued oppression of Native Hawaiians as well as other Pacific Islanders in Hawai‘i; and

WHEREAS, racism was the driving force of the unjust and wrongful accusation, trial, and murder of Joseph Kahahawai, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Hawai‘i is the most multi-racial population in the United States and yet Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders experience the poorest health outcomes due to systemic racism; and

WHEREAS, Native Hawaiians continue to be overrepresented in state prisons and jails, and recent data by the Office of Hawaiian Education substantiates the school-to-prison pipeline that disproportionately impacts Native Hawaiian youth; and

WHEREAS, systemic racism is a social determinant of health, with persistent racial disparities in criminal justice, housing, education, health care, economic opportunities, and employment; and
WHEREAS, racism manifests in distinct ways across other social dimensions, including gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, disability, immigration status, and age, and collectively reinforces the racial hierarchy throughout these intersections, which weakens the strength of our entire humanity; and

WHEREAS, racism is a threat to public health and safety, and is a paramount 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; and

WHEREAS, there is also a long line of strong, Hawai'i matriarchal trailblazers—Queen Lili'uokalani, Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop, Princess Ruth Ke'elikōlani, and the Honorable Patsy Mink—who each stood for justice for all of Hawai'i and who are upheld as role models and leaders we should strive to emulate; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the historical injustices and ongoing inequities faced by Native Hawaiians, the Hawai'i State Constitution and Hawai'i Revised Statutes memorializes provisions that aim at restoring justice for Native Hawaiians; and

WHEREAS, section 226-20, Hawai'i Revised Statutes, acknowledges the social determinants of health that influence Native Hawaiian health, and expresses the State of Hawai'i's commitment to reducing these health disparities for Native Hawaiians and other groups through a social determinants of health approach; and

WHEREAS, to best accomplish the Hawai'i State Planning Act's objective of the "elimination of health disparities by identifying and addressing social determinants of health", institutionalized racism and racist policies must be dismantled; and

WHEREAS, the recent COVID-19 pandemic reopened the wound of Hawai'i's historically shared trauma founded on racism and
discrimination, like the forced relocation of those with leprosy to Kalaupapa; and

WHEREAS, the recovery and resilience of the Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander, and indigenous communities are dependent on our collective efforts to not only recognize the need for equity and justice, but to also acknowledge the effect of racism; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Representatives of the Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawai‘i, Regular Session of 2021, the Senate concurring, that this body declares racism as a public health crisis; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body recognizes the importance of educational opportunities, training, and continued learning aimed at understanding and addressing systemic racism, and of the need for our collective effort to dismantle all forms of racism at all levels and its impacts on the delivery and implementation of human and social services, economic development, health care, and public safety; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body recognizes the need to adopt a Hawai‘i-based, culturally-based, health justice framework that will further combat the continuation of racism with policymaking while also promoting racial equity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body urges the Governor to also declare racism a public health crisis and direct the departments to assess how systemic racism exists in the departments' policies, programs, and services, and to take all steps necessary to address racism in promoting racial equity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the Governor and directors or chairs of all departments.

OFFERED BY:

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