WHEREAS, public health is defined by the World Health Organization as "the art and science of preventing disease, prolonging life, and promoting health through the organized efforts of society"; and

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, racism is the belief, theory, or doctrine that a certain race of people is inherently superior to people from other racial groups, race is therefore a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities, and racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race; and

WHEREAS, racism influences classism which creates categories of people who are deemed "less worthy", and therefore available to be exploited for the sake of profit and power and race is a construct and part of the system of oppression which maintains class hierarchy through an accelerated wealth and health divide; and
WHEREAS, racism is a fundamental component of economic exploitation that disproportionately negatively affects a certain demographic of the population; and

WHEREAS, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities that have suffered the most historically due to structural, distributional, and procedural racism are also disproportionately overrepresented on the frontlines of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, chronic diseases, houselessness, housing and food insecurity, incarceration, and the climate change crisis; and

WHEREAS, "frontline communities" are typically defined as communities that are disproportionately exposed and vulnerable to health threats, climate-based disruptions, and economic dislocation and that have fewer resources, capacity, safety nets, or political agency to respond to and withstand those risks; and

WHEREAS, frontline communities often include low-income communities; immigrant and refugee communities including those with undocumented immigrants; Native Hawaiian, Compact of Free Association (more commonly referred to as "COFA"), and other Pacific Islander communities; communities of color; people with disabilities; people experiencing houselessness or housing insecurity; the LGBTQ community; as well as women, keiki, kupuna, and anyone at the intersection of these identities; and

WHEREAS, climate change is the outcome of the degradation and destruction of natural ecosystems, subsistence lifestyles and ancestral practices due to extractive, violent, infinite economic growth that originates from the exploitation of land and labor directly connected to the disproportionate distribution of wealth accumulation for a small percentage and certain demographic of the population, mostly white, cis gender men; and

WHEREAS, historic and current examples of environmental and economic racism include colonialism, slavery, plantations, the fossil fuel industry, deforestation, industrial agriculture, gentrification, and mass tourism; and
WHEREAS, racial profiling is the implicit and explicit act of selecting or targeting a certain race or races for law enforcement encounters, policies, and practices; and

WHEREAS, Native Hawaiian, Black, and other Pacific Islander residents are disproportionately the subject of police force; and

WHEREAS, though our entire island community has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, frontline communities that face preexisting socioeconomic and health inequities are arguably the most severely harmed by the pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the John A. Burns School of Medicine reported in May of 2020 that the highest rates of positive COVID-19 cases in several states, including Hawaii, were among Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander groups; and

WHEREAS, in May 2020, the Hawaii Journal of Health and Social Welfare stated that Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities have experienced disproportionately high rates of COVID-19 and members of these communities are dying at higher rates than their white counterparts across the nation due to structural inequities in access to health care and economic security; and

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

WHEREAS, the Black Lives Matter and related movements have recently highlighted how individual, institutional, structural, and systemic racism continue to shape our social, economic, and political structures, including through the disproportionate health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic upon frontline communities; and

WHEREAS, to best accomplish the Hawaii State Planning Act's objective of the "elimination of health disparities by identifying and addressing social determinants of health",  

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institutionalized racism and racist policies must be dismantled;
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 operationalizing antiracist practices and policies
through educational opportunities, training, and continued
learning with national networks of government working to achieve
racial equity and advance opportunities for all such as the
Government Alliance on Race and Equity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this body is committed to
understanding and addressing systemic racism, and is dedicated
to collective efforts 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 need to adopt a Hawai‘i-based, culturally-
based, health justice framework that will further combat the
continuation of racism with policy making while also promoting
racial equity; 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 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.

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