SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

REAFFIRMING A COMMITMENT TO ENDING SYSTEMIC RACISM AND INJUSTICE IN HAWAII AND THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

WHEREAS, in September 1959, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed the First Legislature of the State of Hawaii, explaining, "segregation is still with us. We are confronted in the South in its glaring and conspicuous forms and we are confronted in almost every other section of the nation in its hidden and subtle forms. While lynchings have ceased to a great extent, other things are happening. Churches are being bombed. . . we know that there are still conniving forces being used to keep the Negro from being a registered voter."; and

WHEREAS, in February 1964, a coalition of political, business, and community leaders in Hawaii, including congressional elected officials; labor unions such as the Hawaii Government Employees Union, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and the AFL-CIO; the Chamber of Commerce and local businesses; publishers of the major newspapers and television news stations; Catholic, Buddhist, Jewish, and other faiths; University of Hawaii; Hawaii Civil Rights Commission; and with leadership from the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, joined together; and

WHEREAS, Hawaii's leaders jointly declared that, "Hawaii is one of the few areas in the world where people of varied racial, religious, and ethnic backgrounds have learned to live and work together without serious friction," however, "detachment and lack of involvement in the civil rights struggle is not a policy that we of Hawaii should follow. It is our conviction that we cannot assume that this crucial issue affecting our nation is 'not our problem.' . . . Hawaii has an obligation to bear witness to the rest of the nation. We do this not out of a sense of self-righteousness, but with deep humility, for we are aware that race relations in Hawaii are not without need of improvement."; and
WHEREAS, Hawaii has a long and storied history among its different peoples, beginning with the meeting of indigenous Kanaka Maoli and European settlers, through the arrival of the first Black people in the early 1800s, who worked as deckhands on merchant and whaling ships, and to the immigration of numerous races and ethnicities from countries around the Pacific rim over the following century; and

WHEREAS, despite the challenges of integration, Hawaii has been a world leader striving to seek harmony and justice for all races, adopting in its constitution a decade before the American Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation a provision that, "[s]lavery shall, under no circumstances whatsoever, be tolerated in the Hawaiian Islands"; and

WHEREAS, the long path toward building a peaceful and integrated island society has seen minority communities endure shared systemic oppression, but make progress together through a shared fight for equal rights, justice, respect, and aloha for all, including Black residents joining Kanaka Maoli in their fight for liberation and protest against the annexation of the Kingdom of Hawaii by the United States; and

WHEREAS, in his address to Hawaii's First Legislature, Dr. King explained, "we have come a long, long way but in order to tell the truth, it is necessary to move on and say we have a long, long way to go. If we stop here, we would be the victims of a dangerous optimism. We would be the victims of an illusion wrapped in superficiality."; and

WHEREAS, Dr. King closed by challenging Hawaii's Legislature, "Segregation debilitates the white man as well as the Negro. We are to free all men, all races, and all groups. This is our responsibility, and this is our challenge; and we look to this great new state in our Union as the example and as the inspiration."; and

WHEREAS, thanks to generations of vigilance by our local forbearers, today racial, ethnic, and religious communities in Hawaii coexist more peacefully than in many other places, though we are still far from perfect and racism persists toward the
Black, Micronesian, and Kanaka Maoli communities, among others, and we must continue to address the effects of the hidden skeleton of systemic injustice, which has been woven into laws, institutions, and economic advancement since the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom; and

WHEREAS, throughout the United States the Black community and other minorities continue to fight overt and systemic racial injustice and disenfranchisement, which continues to claim lives, prosperity, and the potential of future generations, and has manifested a renewed national movement to stand vigilant and reaffirm this generation's commitment to ending racism and injustice; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, a new wave of racism and prejudice toward those of Asian descent erupted around the country, prompted by unjust misconceptions related to the spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), which has renewed conversations about racism toward all minorities across the country; and

WHEREAS, if Hawaii is to live up to the challenge set forth to the State's First Legislature by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; if Hawaii is to live up to the commitment of our forbearers to stand vigilant and bear witness to racism and injustice; and if Hawaii is to live up to our local values of respect and aloha for all, then today we cannot remain silent amidst racism and injustice anywhere; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Senate of the Thirty-first Legislature of the State of Hawaii, Regular Session of 2021, the House of Representatives concurring, that while significant progress has been made, this body is urged to recognize that overt and systemic racism and injustice continue to harm people throughout the country; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Hawaii cannot ignore ongoing cases of racism and injustice locally, in particular against the Micronesian and Kanaka Maoli communities in the islands that are among the most affected; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Thirty-first Legislature, reaffirms the
State's commitment to ending systemic racism and injustice in Hawaii and throughout the United States, and calls on every Hawaii government institution, business, and organization, as well as the United States Congress and the President of the United States, to lead by example and to take every available action to achieve this attainable goal, for ourselves and for future generations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that certified copies of this Concurrent Resolution be transmitted to the President of the United States; Speaker of the United States House of Representatives; Majority Leader of the United States Senate; Governor; and Mayors of each county.

OFFERED BY:  

[Signature]