

PUBLIC POLICY BRIEFS

SISTERS *of* CHARITY HEALTH SYSTEM



Anti-Racism in Public Health Act of 2021

Issue Overview

Structural racism has negatively impacted communities of color in the United States for centuries. Structural racism is a large barrier to health equity because of its presence within the social determinants of health. In the United States, people of color are more likely to suffer from chronic health conditions and infectious diseases. In maternal health care, Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native infants are more than twice as likely to die than White infants. Black mothers are 3 to 4 times more likely and American Indian and Alaska Native mothers are 5 times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than White mothers. People of color and immigrants are less likely to have insurance and more likely to live in areas that are underserved medically. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the structural racism found in the United States by the disproportionate amount of Black people getting the virus compared to White people because of access to health care and area of life.

Inequities in public health because of racial or ethnic identity are due to the structural racism found in the United States. If we want to address public health and improve it for our citizens, we have to first work to dismantle the racism that has divided us so thoroughly in the past.

The Senate has introduced a bill that aims to amend the health inequities of the United States that have resulted from racism. The details of that bill are outlined below.

Senate Bill S. 162

Anti-Racism in Public Health Act of 2021

This bill seeks to amend the Public Health Service Act to provide for public health research and an investment into understanding and eliminating structural racism and police violence. This bill would declare racism as a public health crisis and expose its presence in our past and present society.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the added research, the goal is to shape a health policy that is anti-racist • This bill would establish a national center for anti-racism within the CDC, as well as a law enforcement violence protection program within the National Center for Injury Prevention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This bill is utilizing two separate fixes within the same bill, rather than creating two bills with their own separate goals

Current Status

This bill was introduced in the Senate on February 2, 2021. The bill has not yet passed the Senate and awaits further approval.

What does this mean for us at The Sisters of Charity Health System?

At Sisters of Charity, we are all about inclusion and justice for every person. Because of our belief in the life and dignity of every human person, we stand in solidarity with the marginalized members of our community, and we fight for their rights. We understand that our nation’s healthcare system is biased and unfair towards those of a different race. We support this bill because we want to provide quality healthcare to all members of our community, regardless of race and social status. We also stand with the victims of police brutality and we recognize its presence in our society. This bill will help by calling out this social issue, as well as taking steps to amend it.

What does this mean for you, your family, or your community?

Even if you have never experienced first-hand the racism found within our health care system, by recent statistics, it is well known that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected communities differently based on race. This pandemic has exposed the inequities in our health care system and now is a time we can amend this system. You can have a positive impact on your community by showing support for this bill because you are in turn showing support for those who are treated unfairly by a system that has treated you well.

