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# HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON RACIAL JUSTICE: FINAL REPORT

HUMAN SERVICES FINANCE AND POLICY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27, 2021

- Final Report:

[https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/comm/docs/AtTtQOzOW0\\_0kfobUfMQrw.pdf](https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/comm/docs/AtTtQOzOW0_0kfobUfMQrw.pdf)

# HISTORY OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE – ENABLING RESOLUTION HR 1, 2<sup>ND</sup> SPECIAL SESSION, 2020 LEGISLATURE (ADOPTED 7/20/2020)

- Declares racism to be a public health crisis affecting all Minnesotans
- Authorizes the Select Committee on Racial Justice
- Establishes several avenues through which the House of Representatives can actively dismantle racism:
  - Collaborate with agencies and community to ensure equitable administration of public safety
  - Review and reform existing House policies and practices to advance equity with measurable goals
  - Assess all internal House processes related to human resources and vendor selection
  - Enhance data-driven education on impacts of racism
  - Support local, regional, and federal initiatives to dismantle systemic racism
- Encourages adoption of similar resolutions by the Governor and Senate

# HISTORY OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE – MEETINGS

- Six informational hearings, September-December 2020
- Co-Chairs, Rep. Rena Moran and Rep. Ruth Richardson; Vice Chair, Rep. Lisa Demuth
- Discussions on definitions, historical framework, and current data regarding systemic racism and disparities
- Expert and public testimony from across Minnesota and the United States
- Focus on disparities in specific policy fields for Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities:
  - Economics
  - Housing
  - Education
  - Health
  - Public Safety
- Draft report released at last hearing on 12/22/2020, final report released 1/25/2021

## DEFINITIONS – RACISM



- How to frame constructive discussions about race and racism
  - Individualized definitions → systemic interpretations
  - Not a simple question of who is “racist” and who is not
- “***Racism is a system***, not an individual character flaw or a personal moral failing. It is a system of power that structures opportunity (education, housing, jobs, justice) and assigns value (worthy or unworthy, full of potential or full of menace) based on so-called “race”, the social interpretation of how we look.”

*-American Public Health Association<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Racism and Health, American Public Health Association, <https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>

## DEFINITIONS – RACISM (cont.)



- Systemic racism has three critical impacts on society<sup>2</sup>
  1. Unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities
    - <sup>^^^</sup>Most visible and understood impact
  2. Unfairly advantages other individuals and communities
    - <sup>^^^</sup>Often an unspoken impact, framed as privilege
  3. Saps the strength of a whole society by wasting human resources
    - <sup>^^^</sup>Structural gap in advantage and opportunity resulting from the first two impacts

<sup>2</sup>“How Racism Makes People Sick: A Conversation with Camara Phyllis Jones, M.D., M.P.H., PhD.,” Kaiser Permanente Institute for Health Policy (blog), Aug. 2, 2016; <https://www.kpihp.org/blog/how-racism-makes-people-sick-a-conversation-with-camara-phyllis-jones-md-mph-phd/>

## DEFINITIONS – RACISM (cont.)



### ■ Internalized Racism

- How we absorb social messages about race, adopting them as personal beliefs and biases
- Can create feelings of superiority, entitlement, and prejudice; BUT
- People can also internalize oppression by believing negative messages about their own racial group

### ■ Institutional Racism

- Racial inequity within institutions and systems of power (employment, government, social services, etc.)
- Can take the form of unfair policies, discriminatory treatment, or inequitable opportunities and outcomes

## RACIAL DISPARITIES – “THE MINNESOTA PARADOX”



- The Select Committee on Racial Justice Final Report highlights:
  - Persistent and unacceptable racial disparities in Minnesota
  - Research findings on the rates of racial disparities and the underlying causes
  - Historical context of government-sanctioned policies and practices that facilitate an unequal playing field
  - Solutions to reduce and eliminate racial disparities

## HHS INEQUITIES: FAMILY SEPARATION

- Research suggests that multiple out-of-home placements are harmful for children and families.
- Historically, children were most often removed from their homes for neglect. In recent years, the majority of children entering the foster care system are due to parental substance use disorders.

## FAMILY SEPARATION, CONTINUED

- Subjecting families to unnecessary involvement of child protection agencies has detrimental human and socioeconomic implications, especially for BIPOC Minnesotans.
- In order to facilitate placement in the most supportive and healing environment, it is critical that DHS continuously monitor and assess conditions including those that resulted in the placement and the conditions within foster care placements.

# DISPARITIES IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

- Minnesota has significant racial disparities in out-of-home care that disproportionately affect Black and American Indian children.
  - Compared to White children, Black children in Minnesota are 2.3x more likely to be involved in a report of maltreatment, and 2.9x more likely to experience out of home placement.
- 25 states, the District of Columbia, and one Indigenous tribe are participating in the federal Child Welfare Demonstration project giving them the ability to better allocate their share of Title IV-E foster care dollars. Minnesota is not currently participating in this demonstration waiver.

# GENERAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- History and data leads the Select Committee to conclude the following:
  - Systemic racism exists.
  - Systemic racism is harmful.
  - Systemic racism must be addressed.

# HUMAN SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand the current exemptions that provide health care workers discretion from requirements to report substance use of pregnant patients to child protection where patients are receiving prenatal care and are seeking substance use disorder treatment
- Allow Minnesota and tribes to apply for a waiver so that they may better target their share of Title IV-E foster care dollars
- Remove barriers and prioritize Kinship and Relative Caregivers in out-of-home placements
- Create a taskforce for legal representation of parents that expands and evaluates high quality models of parent representation resulting in lower cost to counties, fewer foster care placements, shorter times to parental unification and more stable reunifications with fewer foster care re-entries

## HUMAN SERVICES RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

- Provide grants to community-based agencies who serve Black children and families to provide services for family preservation, relative care engagement, and reunification services
- Mental Health Consultation Pilot for Mandated Reporters: a school-based mental health consultation pilot for mandated reporters
- Strengthen legal representation for removal—require a description of actual agency efforts, including an agency’s assessment of child safety and alternative family or kin-based arrangements, as part of a court order for removal
- Develop a BIPOC family mentorship program where communities with the greatest disparities in out-of-home placement have access to representative family mentors to support them in navigating the child protection process