

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 10

By Parkinson

A RESOLUTION to recognize racism as a public health threat.

WHEREAS, the American Medical Association (AMA) recently adopted a new policy recognizing racism as a public health threat and committed to actively work on dismantling racist policies and practices across all of health care; and

WHEREAS, in June 2020, the AMA Board of Trustees acknowledged the health consequences of violent police interactions and denounced racism as an urgent threat to public health, pledging action to confront systemic racism, racial injustice, and police brutality; and

WHEREAS, the new policy approved by the AMA, representing physicians and medical students from every state and medical specialty, opposes all forms of racism as a threat to public health and calls on AMA to take prescribed steps to combat racism, including acknowledging the harm caused by racism and unconscious bias within medical research and health care; identifying tactics to counter racism and mitigate its health effects; encouraging medical education curricula to promote a greater understanding of the topic; supporting external policy development and funding for researching racism's health risks and damages; and working to prevent influences of racism and bias in health technology innovation; and

WHEREAS, though previous AMA policies and principles have emphasized the need to eliminate health disparities and called on physicians to prevent violence of all kinds, the new policy explicitly acknowledges racism's role in perpetuating health inequities and inciting harm against historically marginalized communities and society as a whole; and

WHEREAS, specifically, the new policy recognizes racism in its systemic, cultural, interpersonal, and other forms as a serious threat to public health, to the advancement of health equity, and a barrier to appropriate medical care, making clear that a proactive approach to

prevent, or identify and eliminate, racism is crucial—particularly considering that studies show historically marginalized populations in the United States have shorter lifespans, greater physical and mental illness burden, earlier onset and aggressive progression of disease, higher maternal and infant mortality, and less access to health care; and

WHEREAS, the AMA's policy describes systemic racism as a structural and legalized system that results in differential access to goods and services, including healthcare services; cultural racism as negative and harmful racial stereotypes portrayed in culturally shared media and experiences; and interpersonal racism as implicit and explicit racial prejudice, including explicitly expressed racist beliefs and implicitly held racist attitudes and actions based upon or resulting from these prejudices; and

WHEREAS, additionally, the new policy requests AMA to identify a set of best practices for healthcare institutions, physician practices, and academic medical centers to address and mitigate the effects of racism on patients, providers, international medical graduates, and populations; it also guides the AMA's position on developing and implementing medical education programs that generate a deeper understanding of the causes, influences, and effects of all forms of racism and how to prevent and improve the health effects of racism; and

WHEREAS, further, the policy asks that AMA support the creation of external policy to combat racism and its effects and encourage federal agencies and other organizations to expand research funding into the epidemiology of risks and damages related to racism; in addition, the policy asserts that the AMA will work to prevent and protect against the influences of racism and bias in innovative health technologies; and

WHEREAS, fully understanding that there is tremendous work still to be done to ensure that everyone has the opportunity, conditions, resources, and power to achieve optimal health, the AMA is committed to collaborating with stakeholders to confront the issue of racism within our society; and

WHEREAS, the AMA continues to urge other leading health organizations to also take up the mantle of intolerance for racism as it pushes upstream to dismantle racism across all of health care—driving the future of medicine toward anti-racism; and

WHEREAS, the State of Tennessee should seek to address the impact of racism on public health at all levels of government; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we recognize racism as a public health threat and commit ourselves to openly and honestly addressing racism to end areas of disparity and inequity.