

## [NYAPRS Enews] NYS, NYC Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis

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on behalf of

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*NYAPRS Note: New York State and City governments are launching a number of long awaited actions aimed at addressing the impact of racism as a public health crisis.*

- Several weeks ago, the NYC Council passed a resolution called on the department to work with other agencies to root out systemic racism within policies, plans and budgets on a wide range of matters that affect health, including land use, transportation and education. It also directed the department to improve data-collection practices and examine both the health code and its own history for structural bias.*
- NYS Governor Kathy Hochul recently signed a package of bills last month aimed at addressing racial injustice and promoting racial equity in the state. Among them is a new law that officially declares racism a public health crisis and establishes a "racial equity working group" within the state department of health to make recommendations for legislative action.*

*See below for details.*

### **NY Gov. Hochul Declares Racism A 'Public Health Crisis'**

By [Jessica Chasmar](#) | [Fox News](#) January 3, 2021

[New York Gov. Kathy Hochul](#) signed legislation that went into effect Saturday that declares racism a "public health crisis."

The [Democratic](#) governor signed a package of bills last month aimed at addressing racial injustice and promoting racial equity in the state. Among them is a new law that officially declares racism a public health crisis and establishes a "racial equity working group" within the state department of health to make recommendations for legislative action.

"For far too long, communities of color in New York have been held back by systemic racism and inequitable treatment," Hochul said in a Dec. 23 [press release](#). "I am proud to sign legislation that addresses this crisis head-on, addressing racism, expanding equity and improving access for all."

State Democrats cheered the move.

"Framing racism as a public health issue compels organizations and governmental agencies to address the crisis in the systemic ways that other threats to public health have been addressed," state Sen. Kevin Parker said in the release. "For decades, racial inequalities have caused significant mental, physical, and financial hardships for people of color. These inequities have impacted how they live, the resources they have access to and more importantly their quality of healthcare."

Hochul also signed bills to enact the "hate crimes analysis and review act" and to keep a more "accurate and relevant" public record of Asian-American populations in the state. The law expands the blanket terms "Asian American" and "Pacific Islander" by mandating that every state agency tasked with collecting data on the ethnic origins of residents use separate categories for those groups, including Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Korean, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Indonesian, Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Taiwanese.

Advocates say the new law will help address wealth disparities among the many diverse groups in determining funding for public services.

"As New York continues to face the devastation caused by the COVID-19 public health crisis, it is essential that the needs of all of our communities be understood and met," state Sen. Julia Salazar said in the release. "For the diverse Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities in New York this cannot be accomplished without detailed data that recognizes and respects the experiences of the numerous groups that make up the AAPI communities."

"While some AAPI communities share traditions or connections based on history or location, the majority of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are members of distinct ethnic groups who have their own culture, languages, and needs," Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou, who spearheaded the bill, said in the release. "This law will allow our state to collect crucial data and information for each community, in order to help address the unique problems each community faces and better serve our AAPI New Yorkers statewide."

Another bill signed by Hochul requires the translation of New York state agency websites for non-English speakers.

"Asian-American communities are among the most impoverished in New York," Niou said. "They also faced some of the toughest headwinds even before the pandemic began while also being unable to navigate critical government services due to a lack of language accessibility. This legislation improves equity of access to crucial government services by implementing language accessibility in our government and helps build a New York that works for all of us, regardless of the language we speak."

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/ny-gov-hochul-racism-public-health-crisis>

## **NY Governor Kathy Hochul Says Racism Is A 'Public Health Crisis' After Signing 6 Anti-Hate Legislations**

By Jiselle Lee Yahoo News January 3, 2021

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul signed six anti-hate legislation on Dec. 23 to address discrimination and racial injustice.

Six steps towards a more equitable New York

"For far too long, communities of color in New York have been held back by systemic racism and inequitable treatment," Hochul said in a public statement. "I am proud to sign legislation that addresses this crisis head-on, addressing racism, expanding equity and improving access for all."

- Legislation S.2987-A/A.5679 declares racism a public health crisis.
- Legislation S.70-A/A.2230 enacts the hate crimes analysis and review act.
- Legislation S.6639-A/A.6896-A requires the collection of certain demographic data by certain state agencies, boards, departments and commissions.
- Legislation S.1451-A/A.191 requires a health equity assessment to be filed with an application for any project that will affect a hospital's health care services.
- Legislation A.1451-A/A.6215 requires the New York State Office of Technology Services to advise all state agencies in the implementation of language translation technology.
- Legislation S.4316/A.4572 expands the list of diseases for which a newborn can be screened in order to include conditions more prevalent in newborns from the Middle East, Africa and Southeast Asia.

.. "Asian-American communities are among the most impoverished in New York," Niou said. "They also faced some of the toughest headwinds even before the pandemic began while also being unable to navigate critical government services due to a lack of language accessibility. This legislation improves equity of access to crucial government services by implementing language accessibility in our government and helps build a New York that works for all of us, regardless of the language we speak."

<https://news.yahoo.com/ny-governor-kathy-hochul-says-001151511.html>

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## **Racism Is Declared a Public Health Crisis in New York City**

By Karen Zraick New York Times October 19, 2021

The New York City Board of Health declared racism a public health crisis on Monday, passing a resolution that directed the Health Department to take steps to ensure a "racially just recovery" from the coronavirus pandemic.

The resolution called on the department to work with other agencies to root out systemic racism within policies, plans and budgets on a wide range of matters that affect health, including land use, transportation and education. It also directed the department to improve data-collection practices and examine both the health code and its own history for structural bias.

Dr. Dave A. Chokshi, the department's commissioner, is also one of the 11 medical experts who sit on its board. At the meeting on Monday, he noted that the board was founded amid epidemics of yellow fever, cholera and smallpox in the early 1800s. Advances in sanitation and understanding the links between environmental factors and health helped curb those diseases.

He drew a parallel to the current pandemic, and its outsized toll on communities of color.

“Why do some nonwhite populations develop severe disease and die from Covid-19 at higher rates than whites?” he said. “Underlying health conditions undoubtedly play a role. But why are there higher rates of hypertension, diabetes and obesity in communities of color? The answer does not lie in biology. Structural and environmental factors such as disinvestment, discrimination, and disinformation underlie a greater burden of these diseases in communities of color.”

He added, “The Covid-19 pandemic must render unacceptable that which has been condoned for generations.”

The department is one of the largest public health agencies in the world, and one of the oldest in the country. The members of its board, who are appointed by the mayor with the consent of the City Council, serve without pay and oversee the health code.

More than 200 similar declarations have been made by municipalities, health agencies and elected officials across the country, according to a database maintained by the American Public Health Association. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has also called attention to how racism affects illness rates and life expectancy.

But the New York Health Department said its resolution was one of the first that was tied to specific directives. Those include making recommendations to the mayor’s Racial Justice Commission and establishing a Data for Equity working group, designed to ensure the department applies an “equity lens” to public health data and educates other agencies on how to do the same.

The resolution also called on the department to investigate its own role in “divesting and underinvesting in critical community-led health programs.”

Dr. Michelle Morse, chief medical officer and a deputy commissioner at the Health Department, called the resolution’s passage “a hopeful milestone,” but added that it was only one piece of a much larger puzzle.

She said that strategies like updating the city’s health code and investing in disadvantaged areas were key.

“One of the ways that racism is expressed at a policy level is inaction in the face of need,” she said.

The resolution builds on a statement the department released in June 2020, amid widespread protests after the killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis. The statement vowed to address racism “as a social determinant of health as part of our mission to protect the health of New Yorkers.”

Dr. Kitaw Demissie, dean of the School of Public Health at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University in Brooklyn, welcomed the resolution as a good start.

"I like the idea, that they're focusing on this issue," he said. "Now the most important thing is to see its implementation, to see the investment, and to see the changes that are going to come."

He said the stark differences in disease and death rates seen during the pandemic brought attention to longstanding inequities.

"Covid-19 was like a magnifying glass for us to see what has already been in existence for a long time," he said. "Racial/ethnic disparities in health have been a pandemic."

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/19/nyregion/nyc-racism-healthcare-system.html>

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