

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 74

BY SENATORS CARTER, BARROW, BOUDREAUX, BOUIE, FIELDS, HARRIS,
JACKSON, PETERSON, PRICE AND TARVER

A RESOLUTION

To urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to study the matter of racial disparities in COVID-19 death rates in this state and to report findings of the study to the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana.

WHEREAS, the ongoing global outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel coronavirus and named "coronavirus disease 2019", abbreviated as "COVID-19", has been recognized as a pandemic since March 11, 2020; and

WHEREAS, in Louisiana and throughout the United States, the COVID-19 pandemic is challenging our society in myriad, unprecedented ways; and

WHEREAS, as of the date of filing of this Resolution, Louisiana has registered nearly two thousand seven hundred officially reported deaths from COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana's per capita rates of COVID-19 infections and deaths have been, and continue to rank, among the highest of all U.S. states; and

WHEREAS, the tremendous overall loss of life from this sudden epidemic of infectious disease that Louisiana has endured is a profound tragedy; and

WHEREAS, worsening this tragedy is the vast racial disparity in COVID-19 mortality in this state and across the nation; and

WHEREAS, a report by APM Research Lab entitled "Color of Coronavirus" released on May 20, 2020, presents evidence of an enormous discrepancy between the death rate of black Americans and that of the rest of the nation's populace; the report indicates that black Americans have died of COVID-19 at almost three times the rate of white Americans; and

WHEREAS, researchers at the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center at New Orleans began examining coronavirus patients at the outset of the pandemic, and their findings with respect to the disease process and patient physiology published on May 27, 2020, in the medical journal *The Lancet* have shed some early light on the precise medical reasons for African Americans experiencing more severe complications and deaths related to COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, while Louisiana is deeply beloved to nearly all who call her "home", she suffers both from persistent social ills borne of a legacy of racial injustice and from public health outcomes that are consistently among the worst in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the extent to which the problems of institutional racism and health inequality are intertwined is becoming clearer as research on these subjects mounts; and

WHEREAS, as evidenced in part by the adoption of House Resolution No. 294 and Senate Resolution No. 240 of the 2019 Regular Session addressing racial disparities in maternal and child health outcomes and the alarming rate of mortality for African-American infants and mothers in Louisiana, the legislature was aware prior to COVID-19 of threats to public health that impact our state's people unequally; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 public health emergency is bringing the issue of health equity into sharp focus; and

WHEREAS, it is vitally important for the legislature, as the policymaking branch of this state's government, to address health equity in a meaningful way through public policy; and

WHEREAS, in order to do so, members of the legislature must gain a deeper understanding of the unique problems that threaten the health, well-being, and very existence of black lives in Louisiana.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana does hereby urge and request the Louisiana Department of Health to study the matter of racial disparities in COVID-19 death rates in this state.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in conducting the study called for in this Resolution, the Louisiana Department of Health shall engage and solicit input from the governor's COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Louisiana Department of Health shall submit findings from the study called for in this Resolution to each member of the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana no later than sixty days prior to the convening of the 2021 Regular Session of the legislature.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to the secretary of the Louisiana Department of Health and to each member of the governor's COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force.

PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE