

## THE ANTI-RACISM IN PUBLIC HEALTH ACT OF 2023

Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Rep. Ayanna Pressley (D-MA-07), and Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA-13)

For centuries, structural racism has harmed Black and Brown communities and served as a major barrier to health equity. Racial disparities in health outcomes exist at alarming rates and can be seen in the prevalence of chronic health conditions, such as diabetes, asthma, and hypertension; infant mortality; maternal mortality and morbidity; and police brutality.<sup>1</sup>

Due to our nation's failure to provide access to quality health care, people of color and immigrants are less likely to be insured, have access to health care providers, and receive routine and preventive medical care, exacerbating racial disparities and the prevalence of chronic health conditions.<sup>2</sup> Black, American Indian, and Alaska Native women are two to three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women.<sup>3</sup> And police brutality and violence have robbed our communities of countless Black and Brown lives, as Black people are twice as likely to be killed by police as white people.<sup>4</sup>

Comprehensive research on the public health impacts of structural racism is needed to confront and dismantle the racist systems and practices that create racial disparities and to develop race-conscious public health approaches to reverse the existing disparities that have plagued our nation for too long.

To help expand research and investment in the public health impacts of structural racism, and to require the federal government to begin actively developing anti-racist health policy, Senator Warren and Congresswomen Pressley and Lee have introduced the Anti-Racism in Public Health Act, which would:

- Create a “National Center for Anti-Racism” at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to declare racism as the public health crisis that it is and further develop the research base and knowledge of the science and practice of anti-racism. The Center would be responsible for:
  - o Conducting research, collecting data, awarding grants, and providing leadership and coordination on the science and practice of anti-racism in the provision of health care, the public health impacts of systemic racism, and the effectiveness of interventions to address these impacts;
  - o Creating at least three regional centers of excellence in anti-racism;
  - o Educating the public on the public health impacts of structural racism and anti-racist public health interventions;
  - o Consulting with other Centers at the CDC to ensure that scientific and programmatic activities initiated by the agency consider structural racism in their designs, conceptualizations, and executions; and
- Create a Law Enforcement Violence Prevention Program within the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the CDC. Physical and psychological violence perpetuated by law enforcement results in deaths, injuries, trauma, and stress, and disproportionately affects marginalized populations. This bill would take a public health approach to combatting police brutality and violence by creating a dedicated law enforcement violence prevention program at the CDC.

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<sup>1</sup> *Health Disparities by Race and Ethnicity*, Center for American Progress (2020), [americanprogress.org/article/health-disparities-race-ethnicity](https://americanprogress.org/article/health-disparities-race-ethnicity).

<sup>2</sup> *Health Coverage by Race and Ethnicity*, Kaiser Family Foundation (Dec. 2022), [kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/health-coverage-by-race-and-ethnicity](https://kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/health-coverage-by-race-and-ethnicity).

<sup>3</sup> *Racial Disparities in Maternal and Infant Health: Current Status and Efforts to Address Them*, Kaiser Family Foundation (Nov. 2022), [kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-in-maternal-and-infant-health-current-status-and-efforts-to-address-them](https://kff.org/racial-equity-and-health-policy/issue-brief/racial-disparities-in-maternal-and-infant-health-current-status-and-efforts-to-address-them).

<sup>4</sup> *Report: Black people are still killed by police at a higher rate than other groups*, NBC News (March 2022), [nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/report-black-people-are-still-killed-police-higher-rate-groups-rcna17169](https://nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/report-black-people-are-still-killed-police-higher-rate-groups-rcna17169).