HOUSE RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, The American field of medicine has long been predominantly white, and systemic racism and discrimination have driven health disparities along racial lines; implicit bias has had an impact on the quality of provider services, while living in poverty has limited access to healthy food and preventive care; and

WHEREAS, Currently, Black patients experience worse health outcomes and higher rates of conditions like hypertension and diabetes; Black babies in the U.S. are up to three times more likely to die in the days and weeks following their births compared to white babies; Blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans have suffered disproportionately during the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, The racist past of the medical profession has had a devastating effect on the lives and careers of Black Americans, both for those seeking care from the medical profession and for those serving in the medical profession; and

WHEREAS, In 1934, Dr. Roland B. Scott was the first African-American to pass the pediatric board exam; he was a faculty member at Howard University and established its center
for the study of sickle cell disease; he gained national acclaim for his research on the blood disorder; and

WHEREAS, When Dr. Scott applied for membership with the American Academy of Pediatrics with its one criteria for admission being board certification, he was rejected multiple times beginning in 1939; and

WHEREAS, Dr. Scott was eventually accepted along with his Howard professor, Dr. Alonzo deGrate Smith, another Black pediatrician; they were only allowed to join for educational purposes and were not permitted to attend meetings in the South, ostensibly for their safety; and

WHEREAS, More than a half-century later, the American Academy of Pediatrics has formally apologized for its racist actions, including its initial rejections of Drs. Scott and Smith on the basis of their race; the group also changed its bylaws to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity; they acknowledged that the apology was long overdue and was prompted by the example of another organization that confronted its racist past, the American Medical Association; and

WHEREAS, Few medical organizations have confronted the
roles they played in blocking opportunities for Black
advancement in the medical profession until the formal
apologies by the American Medical Association and, more
recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics; and

WHEREAS, The A.M.A. issued an apology in 2008 for its more
than century-long history of discriminating against
African-American physicians; for decades, the organization
predicated its membership on joining a local or state medical
society, many of which excluded Black physicians, especially
in the South; the A.M.A.'s apology came in the wake of a paper
published in the Journal of the American Medical Association
that examined a number of discriminatory aspects of the
group's history, including its efforts to close
African-American medical schools; and

WHEREAS, For some Black physicians, exclusion from the
A.M.A. meant the loss of career advancement opportunities;
others struggled to gain access to the postgraduate training
they needed for certification in certain medical specialties;
as a result, many Black physicians were limited to becoming
general practitioners, especially in the South; some
facilities also required A.M.A. membership for admitting
privileges to hospitals; and

WHEREAS, By 1964, the A.M.A. changed its position and
refused to certify medical societies that discriminated on the basis of race, but persistent segregation in local groups still limited Black physicians' access to certain hospitals, as well as opportunities for specialty training and certification; and

WHEREAS, The A.M.A. also played a role in limiting medical educational opportunities available to Black physicians; in the early 20th century, before the medical field held the same prestige it does today, the A.M.A. commissioned a report assessing the country's medical schools for their rigor; the report deemed much of the country's medical education system substandard; it also recommended closing all but two of the country's seven Black medical schools; as the field became more exclusive, it also became more white; and

WHEREAS, Between its restrictions on medical education and its exclusionary membership, the A.M.A. played a role in cultivating the profession's homogeneity, which it acknowledged in its 2008 statement; it has since appointed a chief health equity officer and established a center for health equity; and

WHEREAS, In an effort to address this history of racial discrimination and biases in the medical profession, Chicago's largest hospitals and clinics have officially named racism a
public health crisis, a very real threat to the health of their
patients, families and communities; in an open letter, 36
organizations committed to improving health equity across the
city; and

WHEREAS, In addition to supporting programs that help
people of color find healthcare jobs, each organization is
pledging to provide anti-racism training for staff and create
new policies that promote equity; and

WHEREAS, The group, which collectively treats more than 8
million patients, includes large Chicago-based hospital chains
like Rush, safety nets like Loretto Hospital that treat large
numbers of low-income patients, and a number of
government-funded clinics like Esperanza Health Centers; and

WHEREAS, It is time for our State to collectively address
this racial discrimination throughout the medical profession,
past and present, to improve the quality of life for all;
therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE
HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that
we urge all branches of the medical profession to commit to
eliminating racism and recognizing biases; and be it further
RESOLVED, That we urge all colleges and medical institutions that prepare students for careers in the medical profession to focus on the recruitment of more minorities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we urge the State Board of Higher Education to pursue and provide more scholarships opportunities for minority applicants seeking to enter all aspects of the medical profession; and be it further

RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be presented to all members of the Illinois General Assembly, the Governor of Illinois, the State Board of Higher Education, all medical schools in Illinois, all hospitals in Illinois, all clinics in Illinois, all public libraries in Illinois, and the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation, with the hope that they distribute a copy to all seeking licensure or re-licensure for any medical-related field.