



HR0025

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HOUSE RESOLUTION

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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

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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

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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

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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

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1 for the study of sickle cell disease; he gained national  
2 acclaim for his research on the blood disorder; and

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

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

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

22 WHEREAS, Few medical organizations have confronted the

1 roles they played in blocking opportunities for Black  
2 advancement in the medical profession until the formal  
3 apologies by the American Medical Association and, more  
4 recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics; and

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

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

23 WHEREAS, By 1964, the A.M.A. changed its position and

1 refused to certify medical societies that discriminated on the  
2 basis of race, but persistent segregation in local groups  
3 still limited Black physicians' access to certain hospitals,  
4 as well as opportunities for specialty training and  
5 certification; and

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

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

21 WHEREAS, In an effort to address this history of racial  
22 discrimination and biases in the medical profession, Chicago's  
23 largest hospitals and clinics have officially named racism a

1 public health crisis, a very real threat to the health of their  
2 patients, families and communities; in an open letter, 36  
3 organizations committed to improving health equity across the  
4 city; and

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

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

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

18 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE  
19 HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, that  
20 we urge all branches of the medical profession to commit to  
21 eliminating racism and recognizing biases; and be it further

1           RESOLVED, That we urge all colleges and medical  
2 institutions that prepare students for careers in the medical  
3 profession to focus on the recruitment of more minorities; and  
4 be it further

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

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