

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. Box 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0064
(916) 319-2064
FAX: (916) 319-2164

DISTRICT OFFICE
879 W. 190th Street, Suite 920
GARDENA, CA 90248
(310) 324-6408
Fax: (310) 324-6485

E-MAIL

Assemblymember.Gipson@assembly.ca.gov



COMMITTEES
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HR 39 – Equity Impact Assessment of Bills

PURPOSE

HR 39 seeks to increase transparency of the equity impacts of legislation and provide a safeguard to limit potential unintended negative impacts on marginalized communities.

BACKGROUND

In California, state and local public health departments have produced research that directly connects structural social inequalities (i.e., racism, classism, immigration status, sexual orientation, ableism, and sexism) and unjust health outcomes.

California has an opportunity to lead in the COVID-19 crisis and strengthen its bill analysis process to ensure that legislation will aid our state in a fair and equitable recovery.

There is precedence for equity analysis of bills in other states, particularly for bills relating to criminal justice and child welfare systems. Five states such as Connecticut, Florida, Iowa, Oregon, and New Jersey have adopted and implemented racial impact statements (RIS). Seven additional states have introduced RIS legislation (i.e. Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Illinois, Oklahoma, Minnesota, and Wisconsin). The cities of Seattle, Washington and Takoma Park, Maryland both passed resolutions to commit to assessing the social and racial disparities of policies. The Biden-Harris Administration also issued an executive order to advance racial equity and support for marginalized communities through screening for barriers to equity.

PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating negative health and economic outcomes for California’s low-income families, and particularly for families of color. The compounding impacts of health disparities, rising unemployment, housing insecurity, structural racism, and climate change disasters have heightened a health and economic crisis for the most vulnerable in our communities.

There is a data gap in California bill analysis that hinders policymakers’ ability to make informed decisions. Current analysis of bills does not necessarily include assessment of the equity impact of the proposed legislation especially, whether there may be unintended consequences for low

income, moderate income, or historically marginalized families.

SUMMARY

This resolution seeks to prevent unintended negative consequences to proposed legislation and prioritize bills with the greatest impacts for vulnerable communities, by integrating equity impact analysis into the committee and floor bill analysis processes.

In order to continue the Assembly’s commitment to investing in equity solutions and maximizing benefits for underserved and marginalized communities, the California Assembly will explore methods to integrate equity more formally into its daily activities, including the potential adoption of equity impact analysis into the existing committee and floor bill analysis process so that policymakers can make informed, data driven, decisions before a bill is voted on.

There is no anticipated cost for implementation of HR 39. It is an update to an existing government process that is performed by committee consultants in their respective area.

SUPPORT

- The Greenlining Institute
- Fathers and Families San Joaquin
- California YIMBY
- Education Trust West
- Fresno Black Chamber of Commerce
- SF Black Wallstreet

CONTACT

Brianna Leon
Office of Assemblymember Mike A. Gipson
Brianna.Leon@asm.ca.gov
916-319-2064