



For Immediate Release: September 13, 2022

Contact:

Ron Simms Jr., rsimms@advanceproj.org

Marsha Mitchell, marsha@cocosouthla.org

Milena Paez, milena.paez@nextgenpolicy.org

Danielle Bell, danielle.bell@greenlining.org

Advocates Respond to the Governor's Executive Order on Equity and Highlights the Racial Equity Commission

The Executive Order's overarching goals and actions of the newly created Racial Equity Commission institutionalizes a clear path to address the impacts of structural and systemic racism in government.

SACRAMENTO – Today, [Governor Gavin Newsom announced](#) an [Executive Order on Equity](#), articulating the state's commitment to address racial disparities within government departments, policies, programs, and establishing significant steps to make equity a reality in California.

The disproportionate incidence and mortality rates of the pandemic on communities of color provides a stark reminder of the devastatingly severe impacts of systemic racism across our state. The combined historical factors that created today's racial wealth and health gaps have also made communities of color especially susceptible to negative impacts of severe cases of COVID-19, climate change, the criminal justice system and disparities in our health system. Governor Newsom's Executive Order recognizes the state's efforts towards an equitable future by utilizing existing systems to put equity at the forefront of government's work. Most importantly, it outlines the meaningful steps needed to create a more equitable future for all and requires California to lead the way. The [Racial Equity Commission](#) is tasked with creating a racial equity framework and serves as the state's north star as we move closer towards an equitable future.

In the midst of the global pandemic and the disparate impact on communities of color, Senator Richard Pan introduced SB 17 in 2020 to respond to racism as a public health crisis and began engaging with the Administration. The bill evolved into establishing the Office of Racial Equity to

address the issue of equity in state government policies and programs. Through ongoing negotiations with the Administration, we are now encouraged to see the announcement of future work of the Racial Equity Commission.

The push to establish a Racial Equity Commission in California started with SB 17, which was introduced in the California Senate by Dr. Richard Pan (D-Sacramento) in 2020. The bill would have established the Commission in order to address systemic and institutional racism that has resulted in poorer health outcomes and disparities among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Co-sponsored by a combination of racial equity, public health, environmental, and power building organizations, SB 17 was the result of over two years of community engagement, advocacy, and negotiations with the Governor and Legislature. The inclusion of the Commission in the Executive Order announced today ensures Californians will benefit from the solutions outlined in SB 17 without delay, accompanied by additional equity measures that will support the success of the Commission.

Statement from [Advancement Project California](#) Executive Director, John Kim

“California has not always been a progressive leader, and even today, our goals of racial equity will be undermined if we do not examine the impact of existing policies. Our state government has gradually taken steps to atone for past racist policies in recent years, and we applaud Governor Newsom’s leadership to continue California’s progress towards equity and prioritizing collaboration, accountability, and transparency.”

Statement from [Community Coalition \(CoCo\)](#), President and Chief Executive Officer Alberto Retana: “There are not many places in the world that offer the kind of racial and cultural diversity experienced in California—which is the true gold behind the Golden State’s allure. A once in a generation reckoning as it relates to racial inequity emerged from the pandemic. We applaud Governor Newsom for honoring what is most important about our state and that is its people. And California is finally moving to meet the moment to address structural and systemic racism by establishing the Racial Equity Commission.”

Statement from [Greenlining Institute](#), Vice President of Policy, Alvaro Sanchez:

“More than two years ago, as our state was in the midst of confronting a deadly global pandemic and staring down a prolonged and tenuous economic and societal recovery, Greenlining proposed a whole of government approach to embedding racial equity in our recovery. Today’s announcement is a concrete step towards embedding the practice of equity in our state government and finally addressing systemic racism in California. We thank the Governor for taking this important action as well as the many organizations, legislators, and particularly Senator Pan, who collectively championed concrete steps towards making equity real over the past two years.”

Statement from [NextGen California](#), Policy Advisor, Elena Santamaria:

“Meaningfully addressing inequities and racial disparities is a hard road that requires sustained leadership, intentional solutions, as well as the courage to drastically change the social and economic conditions of those who historically have been most harmed. With the bright light of Governor Newsom’s Executive Order – California can put itself on a path towards developing anti-racist solutions for everyone who calls the Golden State home. We applaud this initial step and look forward to collaborating with the Administration, uplifting community based solutions, and continuing the work required to put equity at the forefront of the state’s policies and programs.”

Statement from [Public Health Advocates](#), Executive Director Harold Goldstein: “The governor’s commission is an important symbolic step on the issue of racial equity. We look forward to the day when the governor acknowledges that racism is a public health crisis and adds more accountability to actions like today’s announcement.”

Statement from [SEIU California](#), Executive Director, Tia Orr: “Without racial justice, there can be no economic justice. Achieving any of SEIU members’ goals requires that we address the current structures that perpetuate and extend our nation’s brutal history of racism and injustice. We applaud Governor Newsom’s Executive Order as an important step in addressing the systemic inequities that have plagued California’s communities of color for too long. We look forward to learning more about the Racial Equity Commission in the coming months and to working with it to create a more just and equitable California for all.”

###

The above organizations represent a strong coalition of advocacy groups, researchers, organizers, and policy change agents dedicated to making California’s communities healthier and equitable for all.