



Governor's Office of
Planning and Research

To: California Racial Equity Commissioners
From: Racial Equity Commission Staff
Re: Background and history of the California Racial Equity Commission – March 21, 2024

The impetus for the California Racial Equity Commission began in December 2020 with Senate Bill (SB) 17, which was a collective effort by former Senator Dr. Richard Pan and a coalition of racial justice and civil rights organizations. This coalition, now named The California Racial Equity Coalition, was led by Catalyst California, NextGen California, The Greenlining Institute, Public Health Advocates, Community Coalition, and SEIU California. Governor Newsom announced [Executive Order N-16-22](#) establishing the Racial Equity Commission on September 13, 2022. The structure and functions of the Racial Equity Commission as described in the Executive Order was developed in partnership with former Senator Dr. Pan and the organizations advocating for SB 17.

Senate Bill 17 Summary

As introduced, SB 17 proposed to “declare racism a public health crisis and create a state Office of Racial Equity and a Racial Equity Advisory and Accountability Council” as an effort to address racial inequities in health outcomes across the state made especially clear during the COVID-19 pandemic ([NextGen Policy](#)). The Racial Equity Advisory and Accountability Council (REAAC) would have consisted of members appointed by the Governor, Senate Committee on Rules, and the Speaker of the Assembly and would have governed the Office of Racial Equity (ORE). The ORE would have been tasked with developing a statewide Racial Equity Framework and a budget equity analysis tool, as well as recommending strategies for advancing racial equity across state agencies, departments, and the Office of the Governor. The original text of SB 17 also proposed a requirement for all state agencies to develop and implement their own Racial Equity Action Plan and provide annual updates ([Senate Committee on Governmental Organization Bill Analysis](#)).

Executive Order N-16-22

The Administration saw an opportunity to act quickly on equity and issued Executive [Order N-16-22](#) on September 13, 2022. The Executive Order declared a wide range of equity priorities across state departments and agencies and established the Racial Equity Commission to develop a Racial Equity Framework consisting of resources, best practices, and tools for advancing racial equity and provide technical assistance to state agencies and local governments ([Executive Order Announcement](#)). The Commission was subsequently codified in statute in sections 8303 through 8303.5 of Government Code.

The tasks for the Commission are an ambitious scope of work and schedule. By April 1, 2025, the commission is to adopt a Racial Equity Framework that includes methodologies and tools to advance racial equity and address structural racism, including through budget, equity assessment tools, and processes for collecting and analyzing data effectively and safely to advance equity.

Capitol Collaborative on Race & Equity and Health in All Policies Task Force

The foundations of the Racial Equity Commission are built upon the work of the [Capitol Collaborative on Race & Equity](#) (CCORE) and the [Health in All Policies](#) (HiAP) Task Force. [Capitol Collaborative on Race & Equity](#) (CCORE) is a community of state government leaders integrating racial equity into institutional



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culture, policies, and practices. State of Equity launched CCORE in 2018 to increase the capacity of state entities to advance racial equity. So far, over 40 state organizations and 400 government employees have formed CCORE teams and participated in cohorts to support learning, planning, and implementation of practices to advance racial equity. HiAP is an internal community of practice of approximately 30 state agencies and departments facilitated by the Strategic Growth Council, California Department of Public Health, and the Public Health Institute. Since 2010, HiAP has taken a whole-of-government approach to convene state government departments and agencies to advance health, racial equity, and environmental sustainability. CCORE and HiAP's work in understanding the key challenges and opportunities of addressing racial equity in state operations will serve as a valuable resource to the Racial Equity Commission.