

LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA  
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH LEGISLATURE  
FIRST SESSION

**LEGISLATIVE BILL 657**

Introduced by Vargas, 7; Cavanaugh, J., 9; McKinney, 11.

Read first time January 20, 2021

Committee:

- 1 A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to the Legislature; to state findings; to
- 2 provide for racial impact statements for legislation; to provide
- 3 powers and duties for the office of Legislative Research.
- 4 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

1 Section 1. The Legislature finds and declares:

2 (1) Racial disparities exist for people of color and racial  
3 minorities in this state in all parts of the criminal justice system and  
4 juvenile justice system. Racial disparities in the adult and youth  
5 criminal justice systems exist when the proportion of a racial or ethnic  
6 group within the control of those systems is greater than the proportion  
7 of such groups in the general population. People of color are  
8 overrepresented in all components of the adult and juvenile criminal  
9 justice system, from contact with police to length of imprisonment;

10 (2) The source or cause of such disparities are systemic, rooted in  
11 our nation's history, and deeper than explicit acts of racial  
12 discrimination. The causes of such disparities are varied and include  
13 matters such as socioeconomic factors, differing levels of criminal  
14 activity, law enforcement emphasis on particular communities, and  
15 decisions by criminal justice practitioners who exercise broad discretion  
16 in the justice process at one or more stages in the system. One of the  
17 principal causes of such disparities is the legislative policies  
18 underlying the creation and modification of statutes relating to criminal  
19 law and the justice system;

20 (3) The Legislature has an obligation to reduce the racial  
21 disparities of our criminal justice system and to identify legislative  
22 proposals that are likely to exacerbate or ameliorate these disparities.  
23 The preparation of racial impact statements for certain legislative  
24 proposals will help the Legislature meet this responsibility; and

25 (4) A racial impact statement is an explanatory statement  
26 summarizing the expected impact a legislative proposal may have on  
27 identifiable racial groups. Racial impact statements can assist  
28 legislators by identifying and evaluating the anticipated potential  
29 disparities of proposed legislation prior to its adoption and  
30 implementation and can assist legislators in detecting otherwise  
31 unforeseen policy ramifications.

1           Sec. 2. (1) Beginning in the second session of the One Hundred  
2 Seventh Legislature, the office of Legislative Research shall prepare and  
3 provide racial impact statements for designated bills or resolutions as  
4 determined by the Executive Board of the Legislative Council.

5           (2) A racial impact statement shall clearly summarize the estimated  
6 impact of a bill on racial populations in the state and the estimated  
7 impact of the bill on racial disparities in the state. A racial impact  
8 statement may include any relevant research on the historical racial  
9 impact of similar bills enacted previously. A racial impact statement  
10 shall reflect any data or methods used to measure such racial impact.

11           (3) The office of Legislative Research may request the cooperation  
12 of any state agency, political subdivision, accredited academic  
13 institution, or subject matter expert in preparation of a racial impact  
14 statement or the collection of any data or information necessary to  
15 prepare a racial impact statement.