The American Heart Association is a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are dedicated to ensuring equitable health in all communities. We support HF 4112 that would create Health Equity and Leadership Council and efforts to advance health equity by working toward specific policies and programs and inclusion in budget.

Risk factors that can lead to heart disease and stroke include obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure. For African Americans, another issue also threatens their cardiovascular health: discrimination. One jarring number illustrates the gap. As of 2017, the average life expectancy at birth was 78.8 years for white people and 75.3 years for their black peers, a difference of 3.5 years, according to the latest available data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Contributing to the gap are higher rates of hypertension, obesity, and diabetes among African Americans, along with social and environmental factors such as unequal access to healthy food and safe spaces for physical activity. While overall death rates from heart disease and stroke declined over the past two decades until a recent plateau, these gains were not equitably shared among people who are from the Black, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native or Hispanic/Latino communities.

* Black Americans continue to experience the highest death rates due to heart disease and stroke.
* Black Americans experience a nearly 30% higher death rate from cardiovascular disease (CVD) and a 45% higher death rate from stroke compared with non-Hispanic white Americans.
* Black and Hispanic/Latino patients experience significantly lower survival to hospital discharge than white patients even when controlling for socioeconomic status.

The Association is focusing more aggressively on overcoming societal barriers created by structural racism because they contribute significantly to the disproportionate burden of cardiovascular risk factors in Black, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic/Latino people compared with white people in the U.S. We appreciate you moving HF 4112 that will help lead to the advancement of addressing health equity issues in Minnesota.

Thank you for your support,

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Stacy Frelund

American Heart Association

Regional Team Lead (MN, IA, WI)