

# **Unpacking Racial and Health Equity Impact Assessments: Legislation, Tools, and Strategies for Community- Centered Change**

March 20, 2025 | 12 – 1:30 p.m. CT

## About the Network

The Network for Public Health Law provides visionary leadership in the use of law to protect, promote and improve health and advance health equity.

### We work with:

- Public health officials and practitioners
- Policymakers
- Attorneys
- Community and Advocacy Organizations

### We provide:

- Research and analysis
- Strategic consultation and guidance
- Knowledge-building and training

## Moderator



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Deputy Director, Health Equity  
Network for Public Health Law

## Presenters



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# Using Racial Equity Impact Assessments to Advance Racial & Health Equity in State Law

Findings from a 50-state REIA legislative scan

**Sara Rogers, MPH**

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March 20, 2025

This presentation discusses racial equity impact assessments and findings from a 50-state legislative scan that can help inform actions for REIA policy development and reform and advocacy around these efforts.

# Acknowledgements

**Julie Ralston Aoki, JD**, Public Health Law Center

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**Project Partners:**



COLLABORATIVE FOR  
**Anti-Racism &  
Equity**

 **The Network**  
for Public Health Law **PUBLIC HEALTH  
LAW CENTER**  
at Mitchell Hamline School of Law

## Poll



**How familiar are you  
with racial equity  
impact assessments?**

Very Familiar

Somewhat Familiar

Not Familiar at All



## Poll



**Does your agency or organization incorporate health or racial equity in bill analysis?**

Yes

No

Not sure

My agency or organization does not engage in bill analysis

# Law as a Determinant of Health

**The law operates as a determinant by establishing the framework that we operate in – where we live, work, play, pray, and learn.**

- As a set of commands, requirements, or prohibitions on action.
- As processes and procedures for making decisions, creating new laws, and interpreting existing laws.
- As a set of norms and expectations that can influence behavior, even in the absence of a command, prohibition, or requirement.
- As individual rights and obligations.



# Law as a Tool for Equity

## – Types of Law



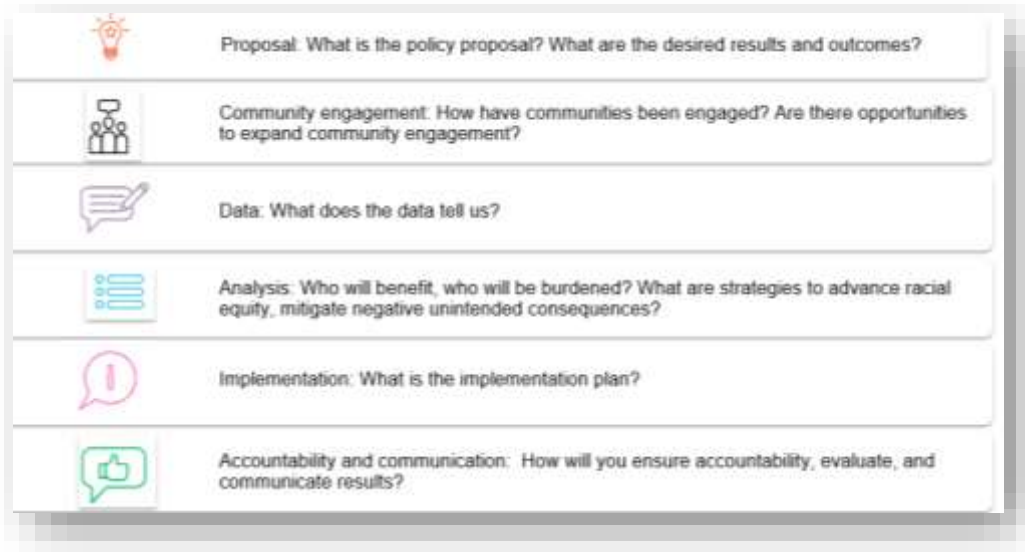
## Law as a Tool for Equity – Using Equity Impact Assessments

**“Strategically, intentionally and holistically examining the impact of an issue, policy or proposed solution on underserved and historically marginalized communities and population subgroups.”**

M.D. Douglas et al., (2019), **Applying a Health Equity Lens to Evaluate and Inform Policy**, *Ethn. Dis.* 29(Suppl 2): 329-342.

- Considering process, outcomes, and values
- Guided by a set of reflective questions that can lead to a different set of actions

# Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA)



- “A systematic examination of how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision” (Race Forward)
- Promotes community participation and cross-sector partnerships
- Strengthens institutional capacity to be anti-racist
- Hold us accountable to each other

# Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Laws

- An emerging legal tool for addressing structural racism
- Establishes a process to require or encourage the use of REIAs on new legislation
- May use different names (e.g., racial equity impact note; demographic note; health impact review)
- Explicitly mentioned impact on populations by race/ethnicity/culture, among other identities



# Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Laws/Bills

- Racial and Ethnic Impact Note/Statement/Assessment
- Racial Impact Note/Analysis/Statement
- Cultural Impact Note
- Demographic Note
- Health Disparities Impact Review
- Health Impact Review
- Disparities Impact Note
- Racial, Ethnicity, Gender, and Disability Impact Statement

## Why REIAs and REIA laws matter

“REIAs are used to reduce, eliminate, and prevent racial discrimination and inequities. The persistence of deep racial disparities and divisions across society is evidence of institutional racism—the routine, often invisible and unintentional, production of inequitable social opportunities and outcomes. ***When racial equity is not consciously addressed, racial inequality is often unconsciously replicated.***”

T. Keleher, “Racial Equity Impact Assessment”, Race Forward, (2009),  
[https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/RacialJusticeImpactAssessment\\_v5.pdf](https://www.raceforward.org/sites/default/files/RacialJusticeImpactAssessment_v5.pdf)



# The 50-State REIA Legislation Dataset

Project aim: Identify state laws and bills applying REIA processes to legislation and key components.

## Dedicated Webpage



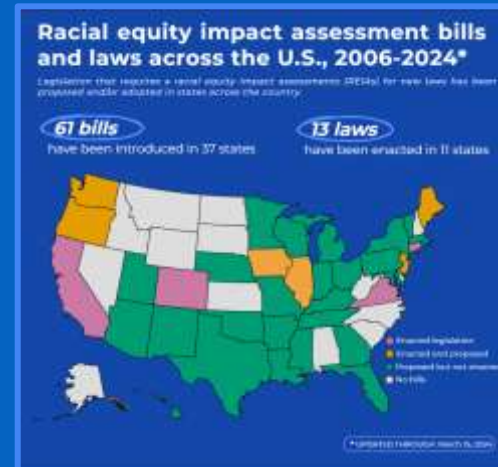
[www.herenow.org/reia](http://www.herenow.org/reia)

## Interactive Dataset

The screenshot shows an interactive dataset table with columns for State, Process, Year, Outcome, Assessment Type, Bill ID, Bill Link, and Bill Summary Link. The table lists several bills, including one from 2021 in Massachusetts and another from 2024 in Michigan.

State	Process	Year	Outcome	Assessment Type	Bill ID	Bill Link	Bill Summary Link
MA	Passed	2021	Not enacted	Racial Impact Statement	SB1778	<a href="#">SB1778: Racial Equity Impact Statement</a>	<a href="#">SB1778: Racial Equity Impact Statement</a>
MI	Passed	2024	Not enacted	Access Community Impact Data	HB 5000	<a href="#">HB 5000: Access Community Impact Data</a>	<a href="#">HB 5000: Access Community Impact Data</a>

## Interactive Map



## Methodology



# Methodology

- Collected STATE legislation (proposed bills and enacted laws) across all 50 states and DC that relate to requiring equity impact assessment of some kind for new LEGISLATION
- Bills had to address race/ethnicity/culture
- If multiple identical bills proposed over multiple years—captured only unique bills and/or most recent bills
- Bills/laws from time period of 2006 to March 2024
- Analyzed legislation to identify common components, themes
- Created a dataset and companion tools

# REIA Law Themes



Types of Law:  
Process/Pilot/Study



Initiating circumstance:  
REIA upon request;  
automatic; other limits?



What kinds of laws can get REIAs:  
Criminal law, or multiple/all?



Who does them: Legislative  
research offices, budget offices,  
state agencies?



Any data sources  
identified? Time frames?



Binding in some way?



Publicly accessible?

# Examples from the dataset

Introduces a new statute that would require the preparation of REIAs on legislation

**Colorado - HB19-1184 (2019)**  
Adds new statute § 2-2-322.5 and permits the preparation of up to twenty “demographic notes” each legislative session.  
**(Enacted)**

Creates a study and/or pilot on the preparation of REIAs on legislation

**Louisiana - HR 164 (2021)**  
Requests the Southern University Law Center to coordinate a study regarding the development of “racial and ethnic impact statements” on legislative proposals. **(Rejected in the House)**

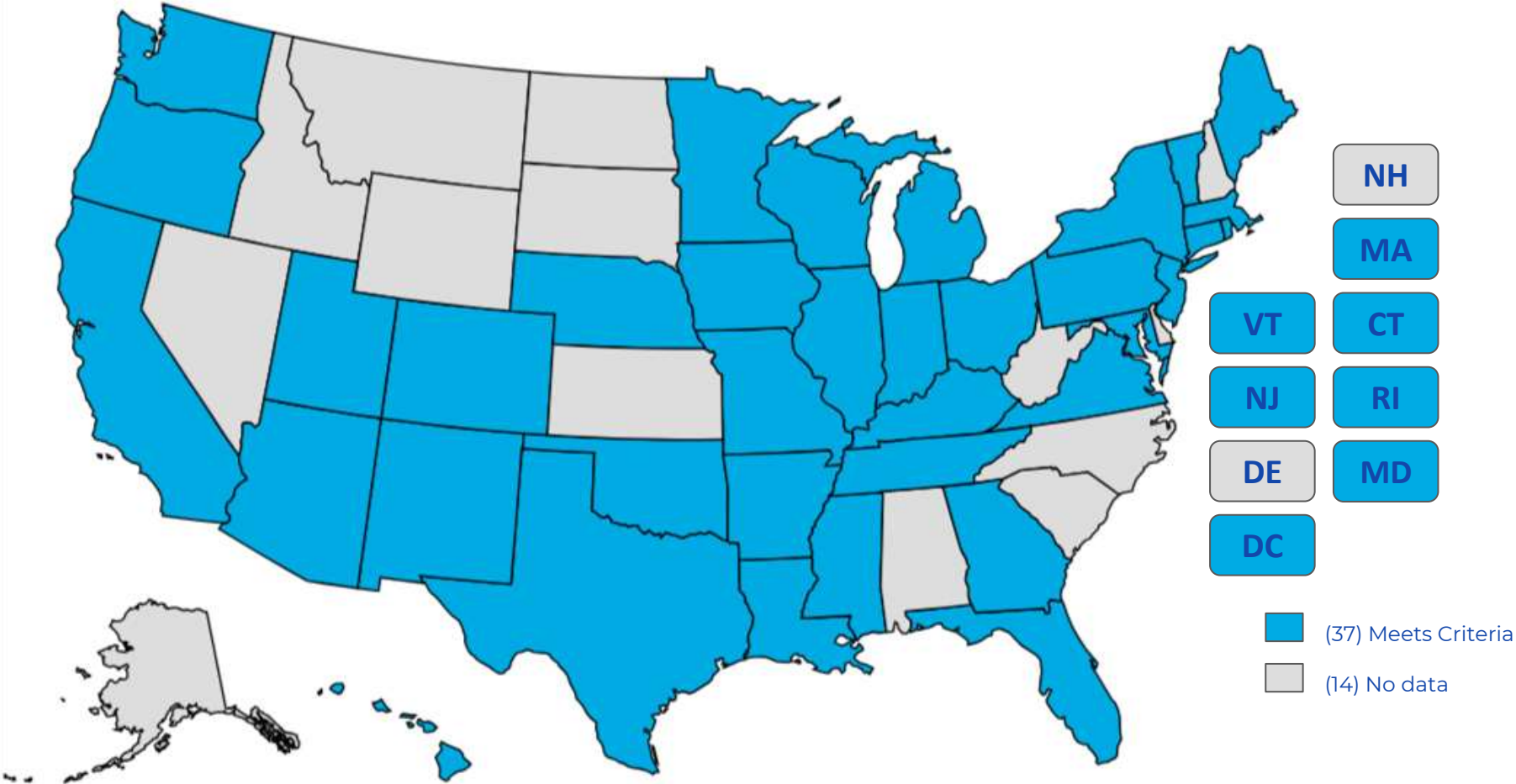
Amends an existing statute that would require the preparation of REIAs on legislation

**Illinois HB 3941 (2023)** - Would amend the Racial Impact Note Act to require that the Governor's Office submit a report to the General Assembly with recommendations regarding preparation of “racial impact notes”.  
**(Did not pass)**

Creates a new senate or house rule to provide for the preparation of a REIAs on legislation

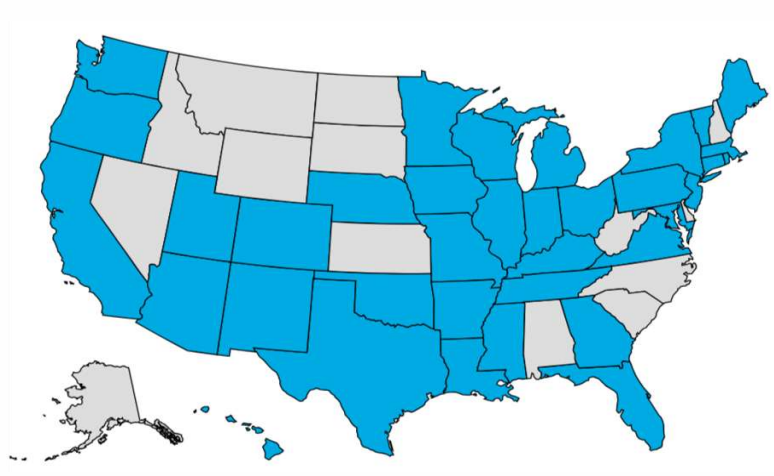
**Mississippi - HR8 (2024)**  
Creates new House Rule No. 104c to provide a procedure for issuance of “racial and ethnic impact statements” that examine how proposed legislation will affect certain populations.  
**(Introduced, Did not pass)**

**Thirty-seven states** including DC have considered **61 bills** requiring or encouraging the use of legislative REIAs



<https://herenow.org/reia/>

UPDATED THROUGH: March 15, 2024



<https://herenow.org/reia/>



**55 bills** establish a process for creating for new legislation



**30 bills** would automatically require REIA be prepared for qualifying legislation  
**21 bills** would allow for a REIA to be prepared up request



**23 bills** create a REIA process for criminal justice/public safety legislation only  
**33 bills** create a REIA process for legislation covering more than one policy area



States' **legislative research councils** and **fiscal agencies** play a vital role



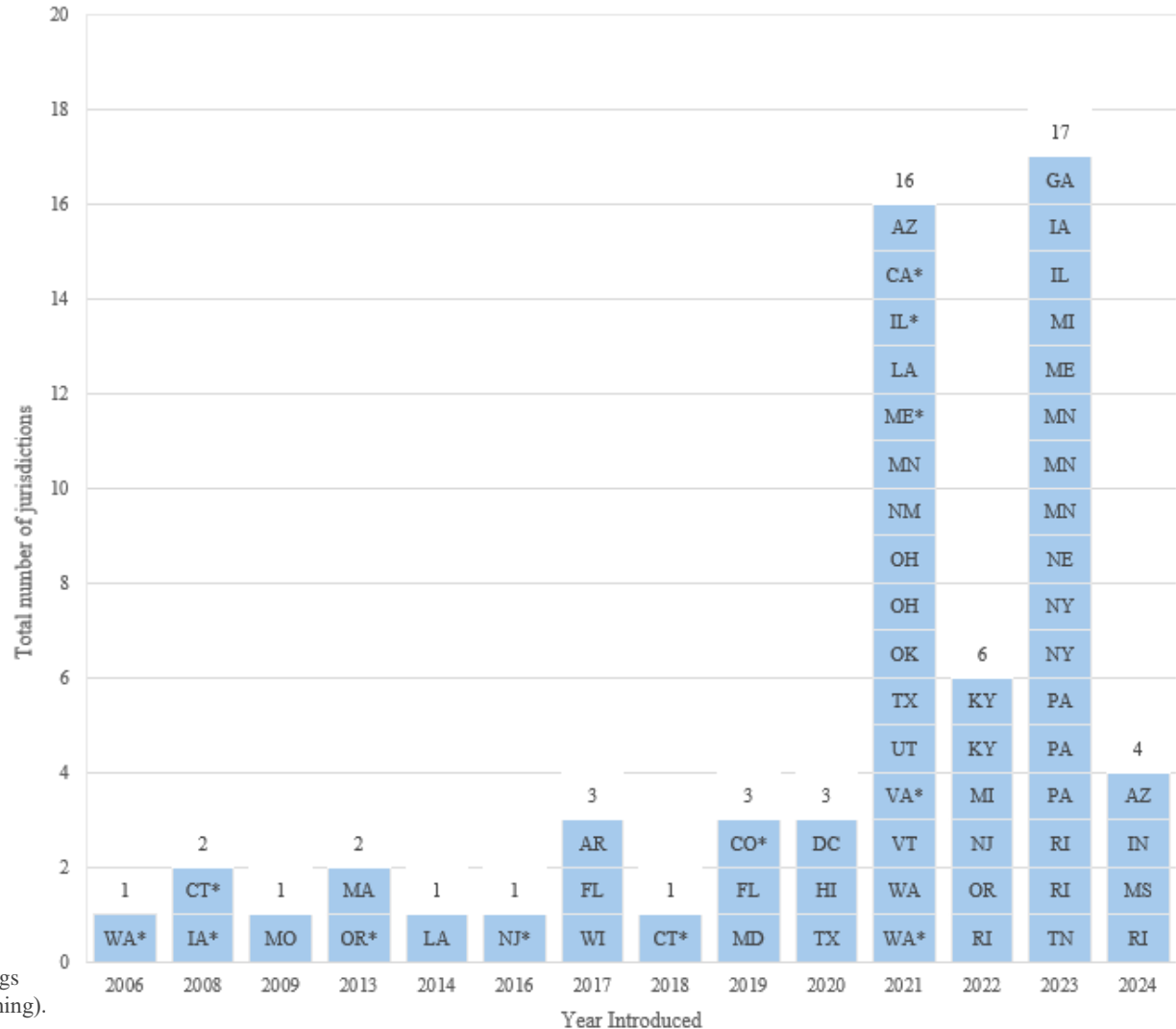
Binding in some way? **No**



Publicly accessible? **Not really**

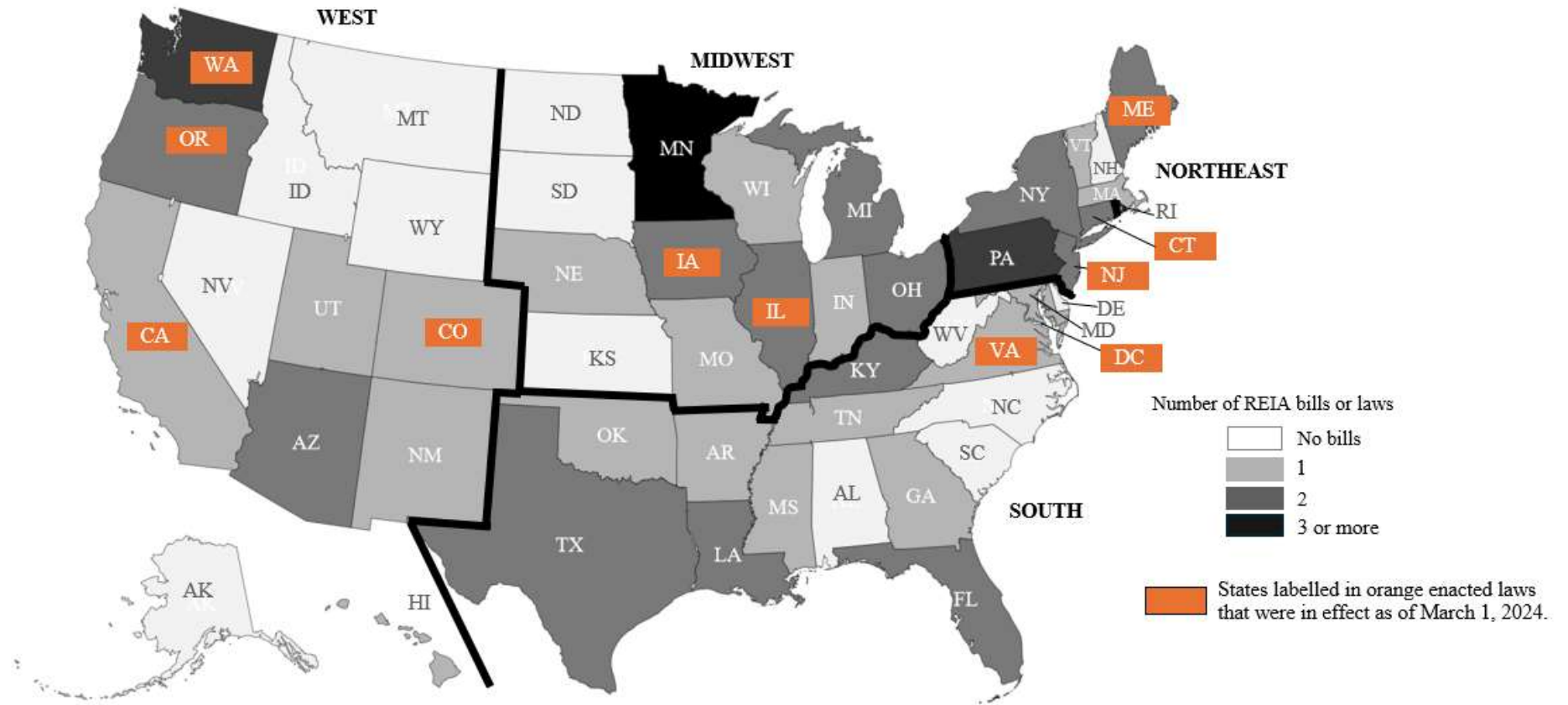
S. Rogers, "Racial equity impact assessment bills and laws across the U.S., 2006-2024: Findings from the 50-State REIA Legislation Dataset" Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics (forthcoming).

# Progression of states considering REIA legislation, unique and most recent bill attempts, 2006-2024



S. Rogers, "Racial equity impact assessment bills and laws across the U.S., 2006-2024: Findings from the 50-State REIA Legislation Dataset" *Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics* (forthcoming).

## Unique/most recent REIA bills/laws, by U.S. region

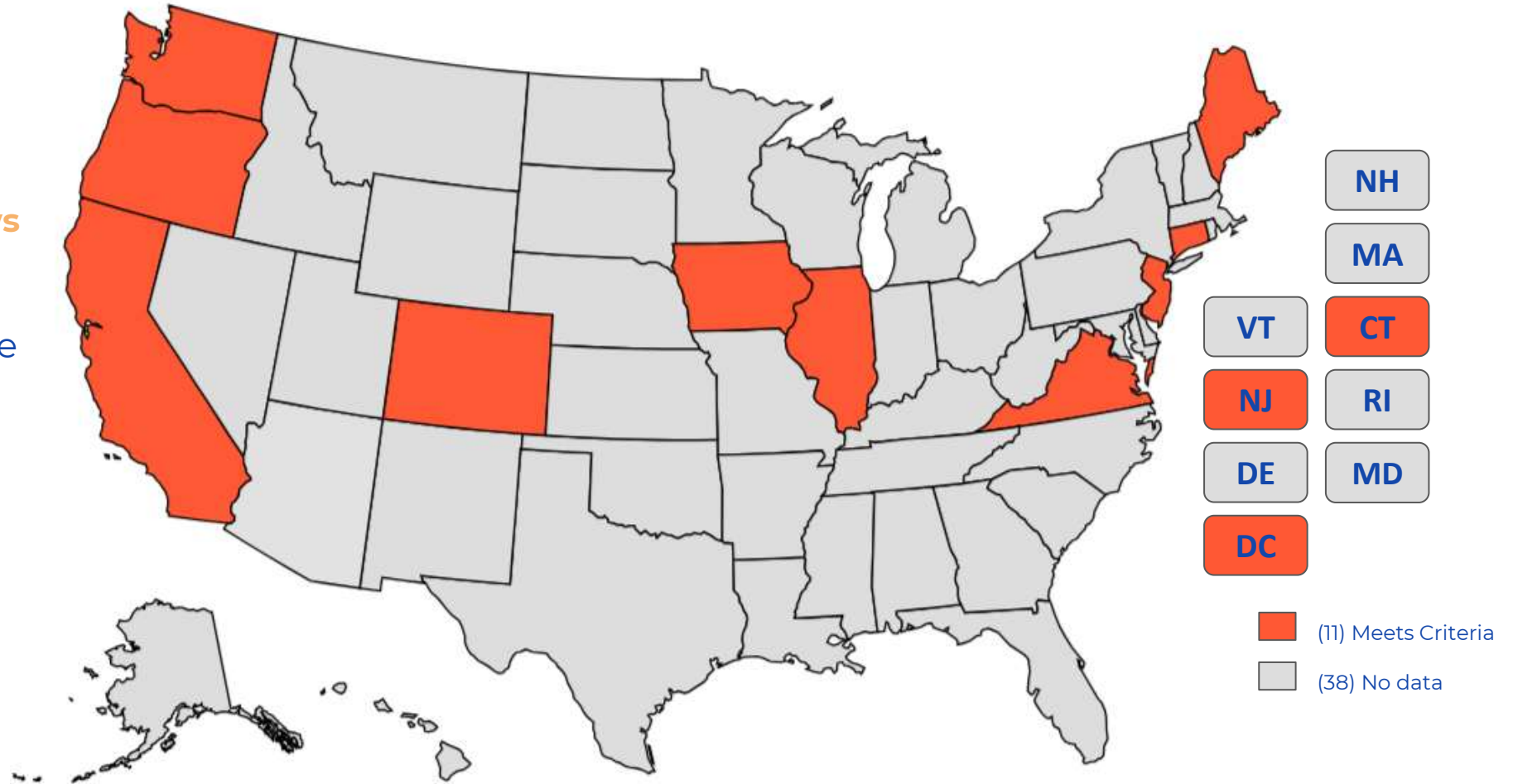


S. Rogers, "Racial equity impact assessment bills and laws across the U.S., 2006-2024: Findings from the 50-State REIA Legislation Dataset" *Journal of Law, Medicine, and Ethics* (forthcoming).



## Eleven states

including DC have enacted **thirteen laws** requiring or encouraging the use of legislative REIAs



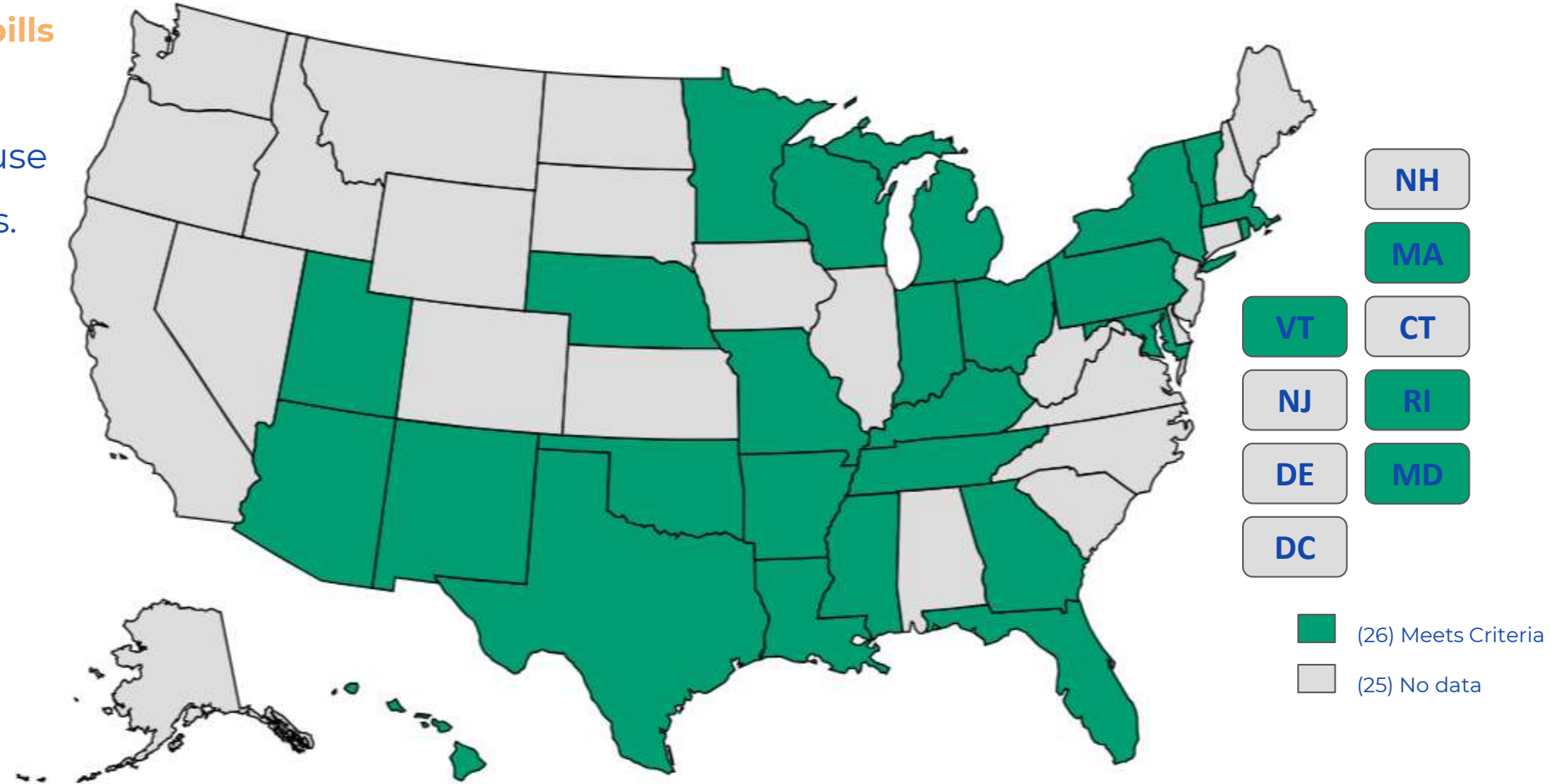
<https://herenow.org/reia/>

UPDATED THROUGH: March 15, 2024

## Twenty six states

have proposed **42 bills** requiring or encouraging the use of legislative REIAs.

None of these bills have passed.



<https://herenow.org/reia/>

UPDATED THROUGH: March 15, 2024

## Current legislative session (2025)

**Rhode Island S0805** – Requires the Rhode Island general assembly to address its legislation with attention to equity and the impact its legislation will have on Rhode Island's diverse and various communities. – [Introduced on 3/14](#)

**Illinois HB 1223** - Amends the Racial Impact Note Act. – [Hearing on 3/19 and 3/20](#)

**Connecticut HB 6309** – Requires the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health to develop procedures for, and to prepare, REIS on proposed legislation and to require state agencies to cooperate with requests of the commission. – [Introduced on 1/22](#)

**New York A06352** - Relates to racial and ethnic impact statements on bills – [Introduced on 3/4](#)

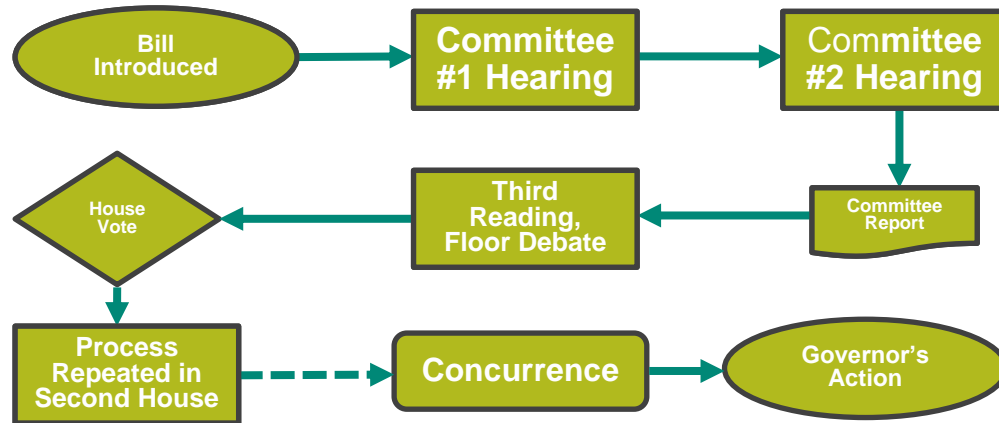
## Takeaways

- States have and are still pursuing a REIA processes in some capacity.
- REIA legislation is evolving and there is room for innovation
- It's important to have a multifaceted legislative approach
- Law and policy are changed through strategic advocacy, communication, and collaboration



## State legislatures are now in session...

Each point in the legislative process is an opportunity to have an impact!



The Legislative Process - General Overview of How a Bill Becomes Law

- ✓ Contacting your elected legislators or the governor's office
- ✓ Giving public comment during committee hearings
- ✓ Educating community members and clients on pending legislation
- ✓ Analyzing bills
- ✓ Sharing an idea for a new law or policy

## REIAs are just one tool



# Thank you!

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# A Framework for Implementing Legislative Equity Analysis

Melody Ng  
UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs  
**03.20.2025**

*This research was made possible through an opportunity provided by the California State Policy Evidence Consortium (CalSPEC).*



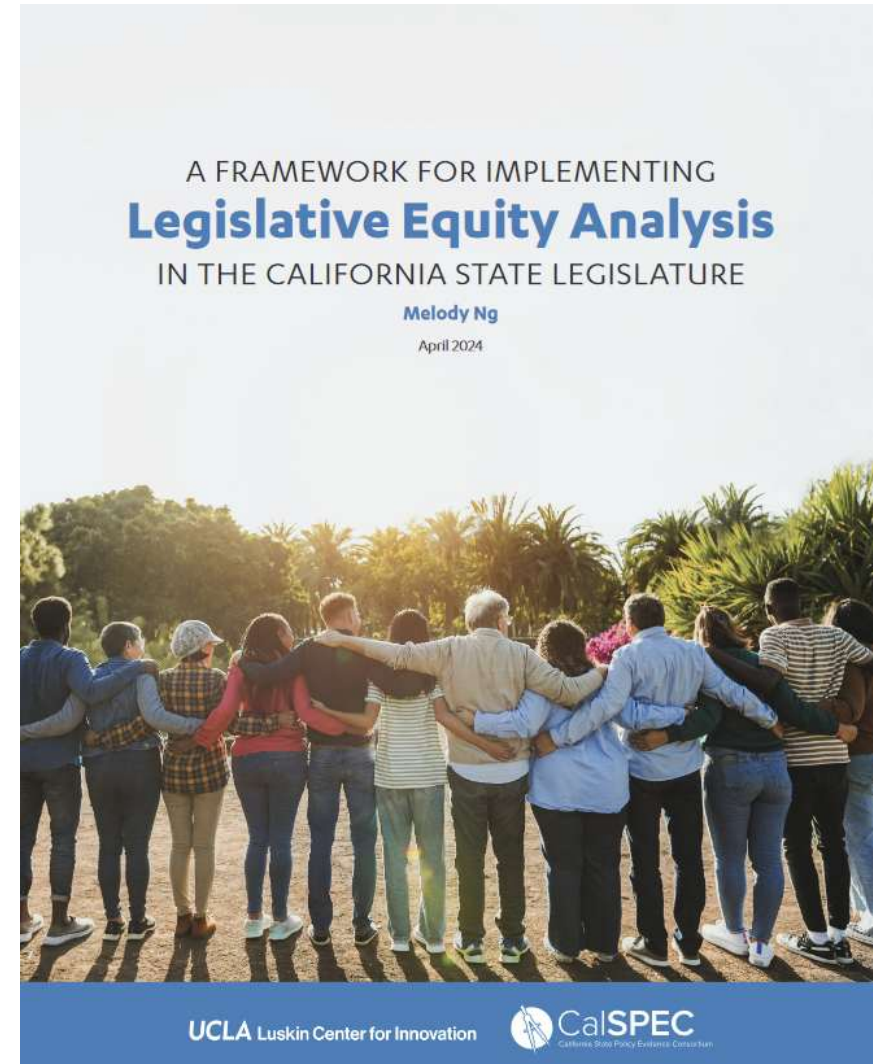


# Central Questions

1. What legislative equity analysis (LEA) models currently exist at federal, state, or local levels?
2. What is equity in policy making?



1. What features make LEA feasible and effective?
2. What are the features of the most effective LEA models?
3. Are existing LEA models producing equity analysis? What constitutes **equity analysis**?



[Link to the report](#)

# Overview: Methods



# Overview: Equity Analysis in Government Work

## History of legislative equity analysis

1. Origins in criminal legal reform; 2008 to present
2. Tools include minority/racial impact statements (MIS/RIS) and “racial equity impact assessments” (REIA)
3. Landscape: **ENACTED in 9 states**, **PROPOSED in more than 20 states**; similar tools/models at lower levels of government (County and City)

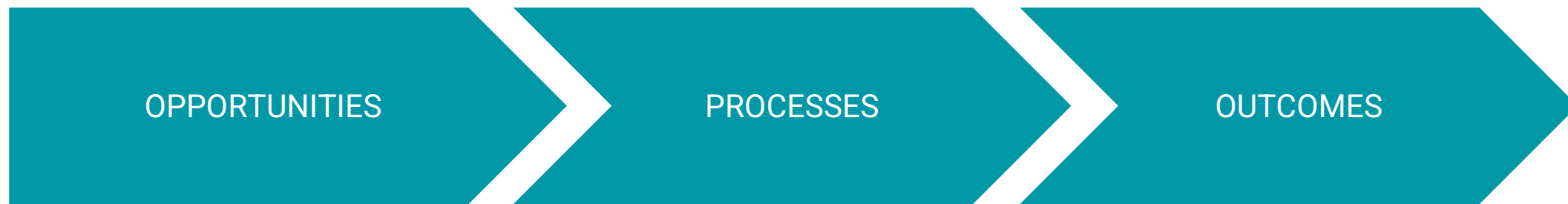
## Precedence in longstanding government impact assessment tools

1. Budget Analysis: Legislative bodies producing fiscal reports/budget analyses – e.g., U.S. established Congressional Budget Office (CBO) in 1974
2. Environmental Impact Assessments: Federal EISs produced under NEPA (1970); California EIRs produced under CEQA (1974)

Infrastructure and methods to implement these assessments have been developed **over 50 years**.

# Equity Analysis Methods

What is **equity analysis** supposed to do? → What is “**equity**” in the context of policy making?



Equity analysis evaluates the potential that decisions have to exacerbate inequities in opportunities and/or outcomes. Requires **two key steps**:

1. An accurate assessment of **baseline outcome trends** for different demographic groups for policy issues and communities that are affected by proposed legislation
2. Informed reasoning about how those baseline conditions came to be – **root cause analysis**

# Equity Analysis Methods

**Equity lens thinking** – an approach to **data analysis** that **contextualizes observed outcome trends** by identifying **their root causes**. Involves:

Identifying **what data is relevant** to assess equity for particular issues and populations

Using understanding of **root causes to contextualize data analysis** – identifying **WHY** and **HOW** the **baseline trends** came to be (the factors behind the trends)

Allows you to use knowledge about **how past policies and practices have affected the equity of present outcomes** to draw informed conclusions about how proposed decisions could affect the equity of future outcomes (factors affecting the trends)

## Integrated context knowledge of policy history

*E.g., Rates of health care in low-income minority and immigrant communities may be affected by labor policies that have historically tied health insurance to full-time employment*

## Critical analysis of data for missing perspectives

*Awareness of underrepresented and understudied populations*

*Awareness of the quality of data for certain issues*

# Legislative Equity Analysis Models

## Features of Current LEA Models

Feature	Limiting	Supportive
<b>Infrastructure/ Resourcing</b>	Government assigns existing legislative staff to producing EA assessments	Government hires additional staff dedicated to producing EA assessments
<b>Equity Analysis Methods</b>	Models do not use methods that result in equity analysis	Models use methods that result in equity analysis (i.e., the <b>two EA steps</b> )
<b>Access to Demographically- Disaggregated Data</b>	No or missing data on outcomes/topics separated by demographic groups	Reasonable access to data that shows/compares outcomes between different demographic groups
<b>Policy Areas and Minority Groups</b>	How many policy areas covered and whether groups included more than racial and ethnic groups → volume of bills to review/ reach of EA in policymaking	
<b>Review Eligibility</b>	<b>“Request” mechanisms</b> – assessments must be requested by legislators; cap imposed on number of assessments that can be requested per session	<b>“Trigger” mechanism</b> – assessments are automatically produced based on predetermined criteria (e.g., impact on incarceration rates)
<b>Transparency</b>	Not published, not publicly accessible	Published, publicly accessible

# Legislative Equity Analysis Models

## Spectrum of Current LEA Models

Jurisdiction	Policy Areas	Review Eligibility	Infrastructure/ Resourcing	Equity Analysis Methods	Time to Complete	Assessments Produced
Iowa (2008)	Criminal legal issues	Trigger/ automatic	Existing staff – analysts from Legislative Services Agency (Fiscal Services Division)	No equity analysis produced	Unclear	~200 statements
Colorado (2013)	All policy areas	Request by legislators	Hired dedicated staff – 1 full-time staff under Legislative Council Staff	Some equity analysis produced	Within 14 days	10 Demographic Notes
Washington, D.C. (2021)	All policy areas	Trigger/ automatic	Hired dedicated staff – 6-8 dedicated full-time CORE analysts (each committee assigned an analyst)	Equity analysis produced	Within 30 days after public hearing closes/before committee hearing	247 REIAs ( <u>2021</u> : 24, <u>2022</u> : 134, <u>2023</u> : 77, <u>2024</u> : 12)

# Assessment of Current LEA Models

## Are current LEA models currently using EA methods?

Included models with publicly accessible assessments (caveat: King County)

Only **D.C.**, **Montgomery County**, and **Maryland** included both elements of equity analysis

Unclear what process/methods other models with unpublished assessments used, but likely not as a rigorous (e.g., Iowa)

Table 6  
Features of Equity Impact Assessment Methods: Current Models\*

Tool Features Question Categories	Colorado	Minnesota	Maryland	Montgomery County	King County	D.C.
Identify baseline conditions for demographic groups (equity in outcomes)***	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify and assess the necessary data for analysis***	X	X	X	X	X	X
Identify root causes of disparate outcomes (equity it opportunities)***			X	X		X
Assess resources allocated for policy/program implementation and outcome monitoring and evaluation						X
Identify geographic scope of policy/program or areas of interest				X		X
Assess level of community involvement in policy development (process equity)				X	X	X
Identify potential measures to mitigate potential negative impacts/enhance positive impacts				X		

\*The findings in this analysis do not claim that these method features are consistently present in every equity assessment produced by the government models analyzed – only that they were consistently present in the sample of assessments reviewed for each government model analyzed.

\*\*\*Features that correspond to the key elements of equity analysis.

SOURCE: Table 6 on page 40 of the report



# Takeaways: Framework for an Effective LEA Model

1. **Provides adequate resourcing.** Time, staffing capacity, and other resources to make this resource-intensive work possible.
  - a. **Dedicated full-time staff.** LEA models that assigned LEA duties to existing staff produced few or no assessments; requires trained staff with enough time to produce assessments.
  - b. **Access to demographically-disaggregated data.** Access to reliable data on outcomes and topics disaggregated by demographic groups is universal challenge that is connected to how data is currently collected and managed by governments.
2. **Uses equity analysis methods.** Having an LEA model in place does not guarantee that assessments produced include equity analysis. LEA assessments require **equity lens thinking**.
3. **Includes criteria-based screening.** LEA models that allow legislators to decide which legislation should be assessed (i.e., “request” mechanism) produce few or no assessments.
4. **Produces publicly-accessible assessments.** (a) Few states have made assessments publicly accessible. A likely connection between the quality of assessments and how defensible their contents are. (b) Currently, all assessments are informative and legislators are not required to respond to them (issues of accountability).

[Template and Guide](#)

# Thanks for your time!

## Questions?

### CONTACT

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### FIND ME

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# Applying Racial and Health Equity Impact Assessments: Recommendations

MELISSA LASKA, PHD, RD, DISTINGUISHED MCKNIGHT PROFESSOR

# Recommendations for:

- Activating legislation
- R/HEIA implementation

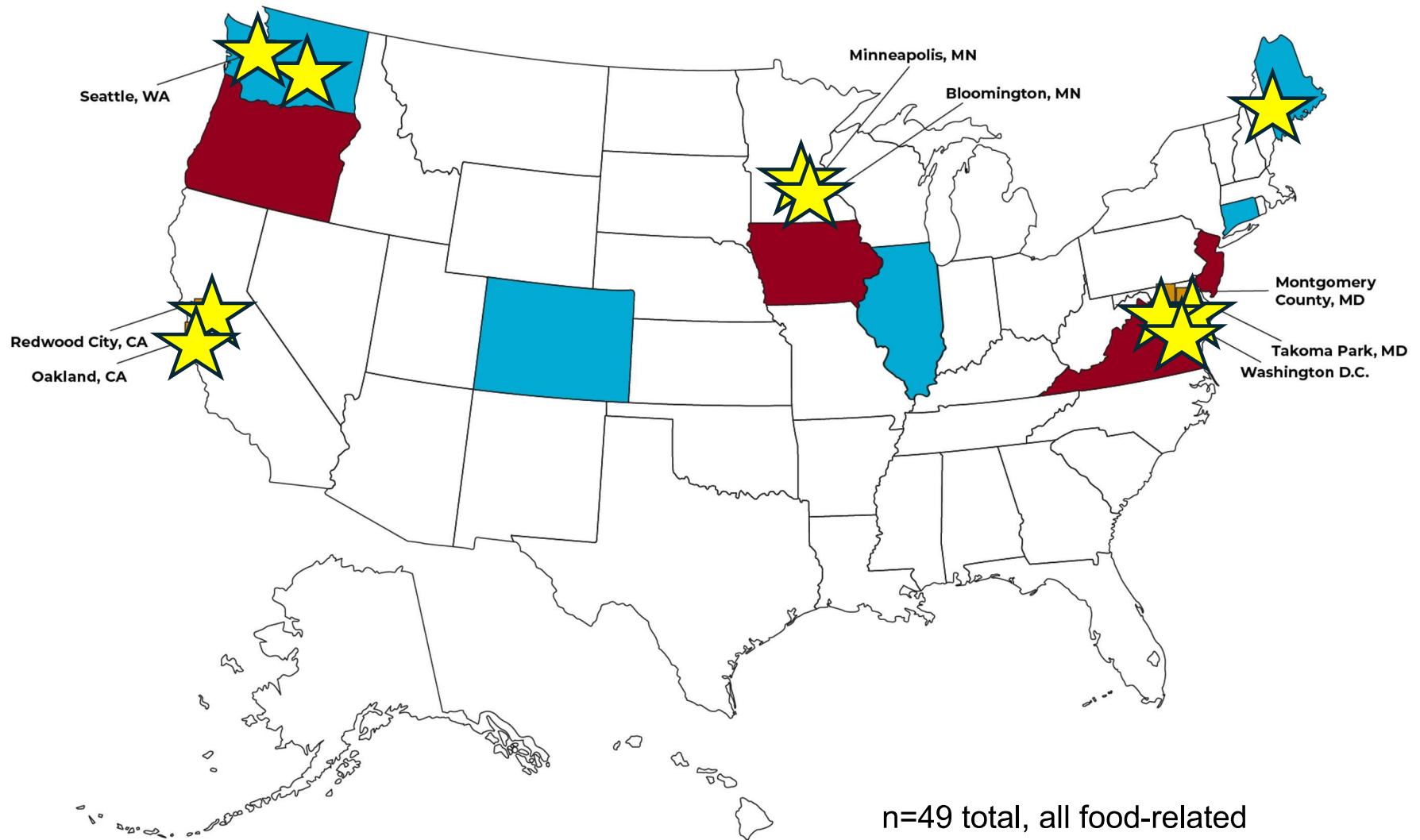


# Foundation for recommendations:

- Commissioned research funded by Healthy Eating Research, a national program of RWJF, with additional support from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota.
  - Identified and collected R/HEIA reports completed on food-related bills (adopted and proposed).
  - Conducted content analyses on reports and evaluated robustness and rigor.
  - Worked with an advisory group to develop recommendations.



# R/HEIA reports analyzed to generate recommendations



n=49 total, all food-related  
State (n=6), DC (n=7), city/county (n=32)  
Dates of reports: Feb 2017 – Nov 2023

# Recommendation for Activating Legislation: Engage community

- Involve racial justice advocates and community organizations.
- Require collaboration with a community leadership council.
- Use community-sourced data and lived experiences.
- Support community-academic partnerships for meaningful data collection.

# Example: Embedding community engagement

**Montgomery County, Maryland's law** establishing its Racial Equity and Social Justice Impact statements process created a Racial Equity and Social Justice Advisory Committee which has 15 voting members, including six who must be residents or employees of the County.

Committee activities:

- Promote information and educational activities that increase understanding of racial equity and social justice in the County.
- Recommend coordinated strategies for reducing inequity in the County.
- Advise the County on racial equity and social justice in the County, and recommend policies, programs, legislation, or regulations necessary to reduce racial and social justice inequity.

For more: [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/boards/sites/RESJ/](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/boards/sites/RESJ/)



# Recommendation for Activating Legislation: Broadly Apply R/HEIAs

- Conduct R/HEIAs on almost all proposed legislation, if possible.
- Where volume is high:
  - Implement a phased approach for high-volume legislatures.
  - Community leadership could help provide direction on which types of bills should be prioritized (e.g., housing, health, etc.).
- If possible, don't limit assessments to requests from legislators.

## Example: Phasing in Policy Topics to Manage Volume

In 2021, a bill introduced in Washington State proposed an equity impact assessment process that would have used a phased approach. If passed, the bill would have tasked the state's Office of Financial Management (OFM) with: developing equity impact statements (EISs) for bills relating to housing or health care beginning in 2022; surveying legislative members to gather feedback on whether and how they used the EISs and recommendations for improvements; and developing a plan for expanding use of EISs in six additional policy areas of the OFM's choosing beginning in 2024. Then, beginning in 2025, the OFM would be required to provide an EIS for any legislative proposal for which a fiscal note is requested or at a legislator's request, and to conduct another survey. See H.B. 1264, 67th Leg. (Wash. 2021-22).\*

\* <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary/?BillNumber=1264&Year=2021&Initiative=false>

# Recommendation for Activating Legislation:

## Ensure transparency

- Require standardized templates for R/HEIA reports.
- Clearly document data sources, methodologies, and conclusions.
- Encourage accountability by requiring bill authors to address equity concerns.
- Make reports publicly accessible online.

# Racial Equity Toolkit Assessment Worksheet

Title of policy, initiative, program, budget issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Description: \_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy     Initiative     Program     Budget Issue

## Step 1. Set Outcomes.

1a. What does your department define as the most important racially equitable **community outcomes** related to the issue? *(Response should be completed by department leadership in consultation with RSJI Executive Sponsor, Change Team Leads and Change Team. Resources on p.4)*

1b. Which racial equity **opportunity area(s)** will the issue primarily impact?

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education             | <input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Justice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community Development | <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health                | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment           |   |

1c. Are there impacts on:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contracting Equity | <input type="checkbox"/> Immigrant and Refugee Access to Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Workforce Equity   | <input type="checkbox"/> Inclusive Outreach and Public Engagement |

# COMMON TEMPLATES COMPONENTS



Who is in the discussion and at the decision-making table?  
How has the community been engaged on this issue?



Who is impacted by the decision, and how will they be affected? Who benefits? Who is harmed?



What do the data tell us and what data are missing?



Will this worsen or ignore disparities, or does it close gaps?  
How will progress be monitored and reported?



Based on these questions, what can be done differently?  
How will leadership ensure implementation of the actions?

# Recommendation for Activating Legislation: Gauge staff capacity

- Allocate dedicated staff to conduct R/HEIAs.
- Require and fund regular R/HEIA specific training to staff.
- Partner with academic and policy organizations for support.
- Require government agencies to assist with data collection.

# Recommendation for Activating Legislation: Define key terms

- Clarify who the assessment focuses on (racial/ethnic groups, income levels, etc.).
- Standardize definitions for terms like 'health disparities,' 'equity lens,' and 'social determinants of health.'
- Define 'data' to include that which represents lived experiences and community-sourced data.

# Recommendations for Implementation

- Include recommendations for processes, data, transparency and impact.
- To be discussed in webinar 2.





# Conclusion and Call to Action

- R/HEIAs can be key for advancing racial and health equity.
- Strengthening the activating legislation can help ensure robust and meaningful processes, as well as better public policy outcomes.



# Acknowledgements

- Ralston Aoki J, Laska MN, Strobl G. Applying Racial & Health Equity Impact Assessments for Better Policy Making. Public Health Law Center, 2025.
- Funding provided by Healthy Eating Research/RJWF, with additional support from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
- Advisors:
  - Tracy Fox, formerly from the USDA
  - Monica Hurtado, Voices for Racial Justice
  - Faith Jackson, formerly from the City of Bloomington
  - Kristen Klingler, City of Minneapolis
  - Jim Kreiger, Healthy Food America
  - Cait Lang-Perez, Washington State Board of Health
  - Xavier Morales, The Praxis Project
  - Vayong Moua, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota

## **Join us for Part 2!**

### **Exploring the Impact and Challenges of R/HEIA Implementation: Stories and Insights from State and Municipal Staff**

**Thursday, May 15, 12:00 PM - 1:30 PM CT**

**Hosted by the Public Health Law Center**

*As part of the “Baking Anti-Racism and Health Equity into Public Policy: A Two-Part Webinar Series  
Exploring Racial & Health Equity Impact Assessments”*

# Thank you for attending.

You will receive an email notification when the slides and recording of today's webinar have been posted on the Network website.



**More than 40 sessions examining core issues for healthier, stronger, and more equitable communities.**

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