

Dear Senator Daugherty Abrams (Co-Chair), Representative Steinberg (Co-Chair) and Members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

**I am writing in support of S.B. 1 An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.**

Every day in my work as a parish priest and pastor in Vernon and the surrounding towns, I witness the social and emotional fallout of this year of pandemic, illness, fear, and death. This year has taken an enormous toll on so many people, especially those living in communities of color. The trauma of the grief provoked by this pandemic will be with us for decades. We need to start preparing now for an appropriate and commensurate response to the enormous emerging mental, behavioral, and physical health challenges which have surfaced in the past twelve months of pandemic crisis and which threaten to constrain our new normal as well as an equitable economic recovery for all the residents of our state. Unless or until these issues are addressed, I fear our citizens, especially those living in poor and marginalized communities, will struggle. This Bill will help our state be a leader by putting into action our hope for genuine racial justice, equity, and healing.

Faithfully yours,

The Rev. Virginia W.G. Army

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