

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

My name is Elizabeth Kline and I live in Manchester, Connecticut. I stand in support of S.B. 1 An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic. More specifically, I support Section 6 and 7 declaring racism a public health crisis in the state and establishing a commission to study the impact of institutional racism on public health.

I am a faculty member at the University of Connecticut in the department of molecular and cell biology, and I'm writing from that perspective. I teach undergraduates in my Biology in Contemporary Society course where we discuss the book Fatal Invention (2011) by Dorothy Roberts. As a class, we learn about how race does not have a genetic basis, but the belief that it must has shaped society, biological research, and the allocation of medical treatments and resources. From this text:

"To this day, the delusion that race is a biological inheritance rather than a political relationship leads plenty of intelligent people to make the most ludicrous statements about black biological traits. Worse yet, this delusion permits a majority of Americans to live in perfect comfort with a host of barbaric practices and conditions that befall blacks primarily - infant deaths at numbers worse than in developing countries, locking up children in adult prisons for life, the highest incarceration rate in the history of the free world - and still view the country as a bastion of freedom and equality for all" (Roberts 26).

Connecticut is not an exception to Roberts' critique of the United States.

S.B. 1 is an opportunity for our state to lead the pursuit for racial justice with action. I stand with the Connecticut Campaign to Address Racism as a Public Health Crisis and ask that the following recommendations also be considered in this bill.

- The name of the commission be changed to be reflective of its work ie. "The Connecticut Commission on Racial Impact and Reconciliation"
- A commitment to 2 members of the proposed commission be persons of color, residing in a major city of Connecticut with an annual income of less than \$65,000 creating a total of 12 commission members.
- Expand racial/ethnic data collection to expose disparities in communities.
- A review and reform of the legislative process to improve public accessibility and set in place mechanism to determine the impact of proposed legislation on race.
- Training for OLR and OFA to create racial and ethnic impact assessments
- Establishing a clear racial equity approach in policies set forth by the executive branch.

In closing, I urge you to support S.B. 1 An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Marie Kline  
60 Valley St  
Manchester CT 06040  
kline.elizabethm@gmail.com