

S.B. No. 1, An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.

Public Health Committee

Andrea Richardson

March 17, 2021

Dear Senator Mary Daugherty Abrams, Representative Jonathan Steinberg, and Members of the Public Health Committee,

My name is [Andrea Richardson] and I live in [Enfield], Connecticut. I stand in support of S.B. No. 1, An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic. *[on behalf of all the families who suffer from this illness: I serve as Advocate at PATH CT (Parents Available to Help), which primarily focuses on Children and Youth with Special Health Care needs as well as families with Youth Mental Health illness.*

[The reasons why doula profession / the collection of race, ethnicity, and language (REL) data / declaring racism a public health crisis / tying community benefits spending to needs identified by communities are critical issues facing my community is because all the above speaks to the equity that is not currently present. CoVID only pulled away the curtains from what has always been an unfair system of rules that seems to shortchange the most vulnerable citizens of this country.

[I have seen firsthand the devastating effects of systems and policies that have caused great damage to families in my community. The type of care or services provided should not be based on any preferences or partiality but solely on need. Families go for long periods of time without seeking care or help because they have become conditioned to the fact that they won't get the best services provided to them because of race or because of the socioeconomic status. My mother had 7 children, I am the eldest and we went most of my lives not going to the doctors or getting assistance from local law enforcement and being ill prepared in our public schools all due to system racial agendas/policies that continues to disenfranchise families. I therefore support the following components of S.B.1: [declaring racism a public health crisis; standardizing the collection of race, ethnicity, and language data; defining the doula profession; and strengthening community benefits spending requirements].

Each of these areas are needed to finally give families who have suffered because of the unfairness to finally have a foundation to stand and walk on. No longer being mischaracterized as people who only want "hand outs" all we want and need is the same treatment that is provided to those who have a larger bank account. These are basics of anyone who wants to have a life that grants us the equal opportunity to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We are the voice of many crying out in the Wind, and we have exercised our democratic duty in electing you to represent the voice of the masses, not your own personal agendas or profit margins, or those interest of "big business" rather for you to act now by answering the cries and petitions for the millions of Americans who are counting on you to be the ones to make these liberties a living reality, not another campaign promise unfulfilled but met with direct action. Don't just be loud on the campaign trail, this is where it matters most in your VOTES; we are counting on you to be the Congress that will do more than speak change but actually make it!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **S.B.1: An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic.**

