



Testimony of Yvette Young

In support of S.B. 1 - An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic

Yvette Young, LPC

Public Health Committee, March 17, 2021

Senator Daugherty Abrams, Representative Steinberg, and Members of the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly. My name is Yvette Young, and I live in Windsor, 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 Section 6 and 7 to declare racism as a public health crisis in the state and establish a commission to study the impact of institutional racism on public health.

“Racism, or discrimination based on race or ethnicity, is a key contributing factor in the onset of disease. It is also responsible for increasing disparities in physical and mental health among Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).” (Medicalnews.com) For centuries BIPOC individuals have had to endure extreme physical and mental trauma. These lived experiences have had an impact on the health and wellness of these individuals. Impacts that have been passed down from generation to generation. The systemizing of racist practices has left many people of color in conditions that are not adequate for wellness. Racism is the catalyst for the disparities that exist in the five areas of the social determinants of health. The World Health Organization defines social determinants of health as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. The five categories are economic stability, health care, neighborhood/environment, education, and social/community context. Research has shown that people of color are disproportionately negatively impacted in all five areas. The black maternal rate is currently at 48, communities of color often do not have a primary care doctor or have access to preventative care, food insecurity is two times higher in communities of color, children of color are disciplined at a higher rates than their white peers and often pushed out of the education system, people of color, especially black men have the highest representation in the prison system, and the list goes on and on. The COVID 19 pandemic highlighted the inequities that exist in our system and has intensified the disparities people of color were experiencing. People of color have been dealing with a health pandemic and a racial pandemic over the past year. Racism has had and continues to have a massive impact on the lives of people of color and as a result needs to be classified as a public health crisis.

As a woman of color, I do not want to have to worry about my wellness. I do not want to have to worry about the wellness of my parents and my loved ones. Every day I wake up; I must navigate through a world that is built to oppress me. I know that my blackness makes me a target for inadequate treatment on a personal level as well as for my overall health and wellness. This reality is why I find it necessary to advocate for the needs of the BIPOC community. Until we admit as a society that we live in a nation that is built on racism and begin to correct the disparities that have resulted from centuries of oppression, the health and wellness of people of color will continue to be compromised.

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. **It is time for this nation, for this State to repair the damage that has resulted from racism. It is time to prioritize the health and wellness of BIPOC individuals. It is time for BIPOC individuals to heal. Thank You.**