



**Testimony by the Connecticut State Medical Society
House Bill 6662
An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and
Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health**

**Appropriations Committee
March 26, 2021**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee, on behalf of the physicians and physicians in training of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS), thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to you today on **House Bill 6662, An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health**

Thank you to this Committee for bring forward this important piece of legislation. CSMS strongly supports the recognition of racism as a public health crisis. Racism negatively impacts and exacerbates underlying health inequities among marginalized communities. Without change, health inequities will continue to exist and build, and the overall health of Connecticut's most vulnerable patients will suffer, and our already stressed health care system will continue bear the economic burden of preventable chronic disease. The American Medical Association (AMA) passed policy at its November 2020 Special Meeting that recognized race as a public health threat and committed to dismantling racist policies across all of health care. CSMS applauds this Committee for the recognition racial disparities play in access to quality health care.

CSMS supports the creation of the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health that is proposed under this legislation. Unfortunately, physicians are not well represented on this Commission as it is currently drafted. None of the 18 criteria listed for membership requires that the representative be a physician. With that in mind we urge you to expand this Commission by amending the language to include participation by a physician member of CSMS conversant in matters of health equity. We have members who are passionate about health equity and who are available and willing to execute this responsibility to both our medical society and the community at large.

Health equity and disparities in health care has been a concern of CSMS for many years and never greater than right now as we work our way through a pandemic that has made us all too aware of the vulnerability of disadvantaged ethnic and socioeconomic groups.

Connecticut must tackle the issues of inequality and disparities in health care and CSMS believes HB 6662 includes some important steps in doing so. CSMS looks forward to working with this Committee on these critical issues.