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H.B. No. 6662, An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establish the Commission on Racism Equity in Public Health.

Appropriations Committee
Donna H. DiCello, Psy.D.
March 26, 2021

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Hartley, Representative Dathan, Representative Nolan, and esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Donna H. DiCello and I live in North Haven, Connecticut, though my clinical psychology practice is in New Haven.. I stand in support of H.B. No. 6662: An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health

In over 30 years of offering mental health services to people from BIPOC communities, I have witnessed firsthand the devastating effects that racism has had on the mental health of people from Black, Brown, and Asian communities. Depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder are just some of the mental health conditions that can result from the horrific effects of racism, particularly systemic racism. I have dedicated most of my professional life to fighting against these effects, in my therapy office as well as on larger scales through diversity committee and activist work. I have listened to stories of mothers who have had children in the school-to-prison pipeline and who have suffered from significant depression; people who have endured continual microaggressions at their workplaces; people who have been the subjects of outward aggressive racial slurs; and others who have had their self-esteem pummeled from societal messages and hatred. This has led me to the conclusion that racism is, in fact, a very real public health crisis. Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health would send a very strong message to these communities that they are, in fact, cared about, and is a step in making reparations to the great wrongs done to them.

Specifically, I **strongly support** H.B.6662, An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health.

I **respectfully recommend** the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments on proposed policies. This will enable the Connecticut General Assembly to evaluate the potential for policies to promote equity or have a disparate impact.

The pandemic did not create the deep racial inequities in our state, but it can be an opportunity to address them. This bill takes steps to dismantle components of systemic racism and move

Connecticut closer to health equity. The time is right – **right now** – to pass this legislation, while we have the momentum and support to do so.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of **H.B. No. 6662, An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health.**

Respectfully submitted,

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