

Dear Co-Chair Osten, Co-Chair Walker, Vice Chair Hartley, Vice Chair Dathan, Vice Chair Nolan, Ranking Member Miner, Ranking Member France, and Members of the Appropriations Committee of Connecticut General Assembly,

My name is Patrick Feeley, and I am a resident of New Haven and an undergraduate student at Yale University. I stand in support of **HB 6662 - AN ACT DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS AND ESTABLISHING THE COMMITTEE ON RACIAL EQUITY IN PUBLIC HEALTH**. This bill would create a committee to study, confront, and create policies and initiatives to counter racial inequities in various aspects of public health in a way that acknowledges intersectional consequences of institutional racism in health care, climate change, housing inequity, food insecurity, mental health disparities, and the criminal justice system. This bill would also empower the established committee to address racism in education contributing to the broader and devastating consequences of racial inequities and to promote anti-bias, anti-racism, and diverse pipelines in health care and health care education.

This declaration and the establishment of this committee is absolutely necessary in order to effectively and actively counter the devastating and vast manifestations of racism in public health in Connecticut. In this state, Black residents are two times more likely to die from diabetes than White residents. The infant mortality rate for babies born to Black women is 11.9% while only 2.7% for babies born to White women. Furthermore, the COVID-19 infection rate among incarcerated people in CT is five times higher than the statewide infection rate. As you know, Black people make up 41% of Connecticut inmate, while they only encompass 10% of the population. All of these glaring statistics clearly indicate the discrimination that exists for Black communities in Connecticut. Immediately, a new committee should examine these statistics and create policies to rectify these issues.

This bill appropriately establishes a focus on the many dimensions of racism in public health experienced by the state's residents of color. HB 6662 acknowledges how racial disparities in access to safe and affordable housing, education, healthy food, equitable hiring and professional opportunities, etc. impact people of color. These dimensions are critical to consider in assessing and working to expand equitable public health in Connecticut as the existing inequities in all of these areas contribute to the disparities in health outcomes for people of color prevalent in Connecticut. This bill also importantly outlines the importance of addressing intersectional inequities through an analysis of disparities particularly experienced by LGBTQ+ people of color in health care. Given how the pandemic and recent racial crises have illuminated the reality of the experiences of people of color oppressed in inequitable systems which threaten their lives every day, the passing of this bill in Connecticut is urgently needed. Since 2020, bills similar to HB 6662 are being or have been passed in states across the country including Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri, Wisconsin, California, and Maryland.

In conclusion, I would like to restate my strong support for HB 6662. The state of Connecticut cannot remain complicit in systemic racism evident in our public health systems and structures. The declaration of racism as a public health crisis in the state is long overdue, and the establishment of this committee is a necessary step to combatting the manifestations of this crisis, so I ask the committee to vote favorably on these important and necessary measures.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Patrick Feeley