

Senator Catherine A. Osten (Co-Chair), Representative Toni E. Walker (Co-Chair) and Members of the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Terry Fitzgerald and I live in Enfield Connecticut. I serve as Advocacy and Outreach Coordinator for YWCA Hartford Region. 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.

This past year has put a spotlight on the disparity that has existed all along for communities of color in regard to public health and racial justice. We must not ignore the systemic and structural racism that negatively impacts our friends, neighbors and residents of our state. Communities of color face challenges in health decisions due to lack of access to health insurance, food deserts with no healthy eating options, and housing disparities leaving them fewer opportunities than their white counterparts to do what's best for their health. We need to address underlying socioeconomic gaps, which can drive disparities in life expectancy by fueling poor social determinants of health. Policy could play a role in fixing this by making health care more equitable and better suited to a diverse population.

H.B. 6662 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 this bill be amended to include a review and reform of the legislative process to improve public accessibility and set in place mechanisms to determine the impact of proposed legislation on race.

In closing, I urge you to support H.B. No. 6662 An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health.

Sincerely,

Terry Fitzgerald