

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

TO: Appropriations Committee
FROM: Shirley Girouard, PhD, RN, FAAN
March 26, 2021

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

My name is Shirley Girouard, I am a nurse, educator, and health policy consultant. I live in Branford, Connecticut. 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. My statements today are my own but reflect my experiences as a nurse, researcher, and educator in a variety of organizations.

As a nurse, I have witnessed the impact of racism on health, healthcare, and public health. By raising awareness about this often overlooked determinant of health, our state can contribute to the health and well-being of all. What impacts people of color impacts the health of our communities- the COVID-19 pandemic sadly illustrates the discrepancies that exist in health outcomes and the delivery of health care.

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. This initiative provides a framework for addressing the problem of racism and addresses important issues such as diversifying the healthcare workforce, healthcare affordability, and the social determinants of 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. Acting on these issues now demonstrates how Connecticut values and respects all of its residents.

Thank you for addressing this important issue and 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.**

Sincerely,

Shirley Girouard

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