

**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  
Anneliese Lapidés  
March 26, 2021

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

My name is Anneliese Lapidés and I live in Niantic, 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. I serve as the Director of Community Engagement for the Southeastern Connecticut Organization for Racial Equity (SCORE), which advocates for and makes change that promotes racial equity in our communities, fostering appreciation, acceptance, and celebration of diversity with the goal of translating these values into tangible action that combats systemic racism and oppression.

I am also a medical student at the University of Vermont. One of the most important concepts I have learned in my education is not related to biology or how the body works, but about the social determinants of health. These are factors “in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks”. These include but are not limited to education, socioeconomic status, food security, and healthcare. Something that branches through each of these factors is racism. Racism, ranging from microaggressions and unconscious bias to outward prejudice and discrimination, results in adverse health outcomes among people of color. Racism is deeply rooted in the structures of our country, and in our state, impacting policies that have been created that impact the well-being of people of color. According to the United Health Foundation, while Connecticut is in the top five healthiest states, we are also ranked 42nd in health disparities, demonstrating just how wide the gap is between the highest highs and lowest lows in terms of health. Even in our healthy state, we are not immune from health disparities. This already existing problem has been brought to light during the COVID-19 pandemic: Black individuals make up about a quarter of COVID-19 deaths yet make up only about 13% of the U.S. population. This pandemic has taught me a lot, and one of the things highest on that list is that the consequences of not caring about each other are fatal. Not only does this apply to COVID, but it also applies to racism; it is a public health crisis.

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. As Angela Davis said, it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist.

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.**

Sincerely,  
Anneliese Lapidés