

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

Barbara Mechler

March 26, 2021

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

My name is Barbara Mechler, and I live in Southbury, Connecticut. I write 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 participate in Justice Southbury, a social justice initiative organized by local volunteers. Justice Southbury believes in equal justice for all regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation or identification, country of origin, religion or no religion, ability or disability. The group believes in judging people by the content of their character, and in turn we expect to be judged by ours. We hope to be tolerant and compassionate, but at the same time forceful and active.

For over 40 weeks, Justice Southbury volunteers have demonstrated peacefully in Southbury in support of racial justice. We have listened to disturbing stories from residents of color, students and adults, who have personally experienced racism in school, their workplace, and neighborhoods. While standing near the street each Sunday afternoon holding signs like "Hate Has No Home Here" and "Love Your Neighbor", many people beep their horns and wave, but others hurl insults and profanity at us. Who would think a predominantly white town (97%) like Southbury would experience significant degrees of racism? Week after week, we hear personal, disturbing stories from our neighbors of color and most recently, our Asian American friends, of discrimination and racial inequities. Yes, Southbury like many CT towns, has a racism problem; it is a public health crisis.

Establishing a Commission on Racial Equity would benefit every town in CT, including Southbury. The COVID 19 crisis 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.

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 and urge you to act now to demonstrate your commitment to racial justice and equity. Your constituents and all CT citizens need your vote.

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,

Barbara Mechler