

Thank you to all of the esteemed members of the legislature that are present today to witness citizen testimony. I am here to testify in support of h.b. 6662 but not without a few absolutely necessary changes. I want to open by saying that I do appreciate the establishment of the commission along with its goals of supporting education, health insurance, women's health, justice system involvement, and a slew of other issues impacting the communities of color. But, when I look at H.B. 6662 I notice the lack of a definition for racism both systemic and institutional, public health crisis, and social determinants of health. Things that are typically present in bills of this nature that are essential to knowing what's being targeted precisely.

So when I see that there's a focus on "institutional racism in the states laws" it certainly sounds fantastic! But, it's very vague and what's needed are some solid definitions or else we run the risk of allowing intersectional issues to go untreated. I'll give you an example in a single word, immigration. Clear definitions and recognition of intersectional issues is necessary. I notice a lack of accountability measures that ensure state and local leaders provide data in relation to the crisis, a lack of equitable disbursement of COVID19 funds in spite of the disproportionate impact of COVID19 on our communities, and an overall lack of urgency. The bill doesn't require the standing commission to collect measurable equity data and with the combination of no accountability measures on state and local leaders we're making the unpaid commissions job a lot more complicated. The task to develop strategic planning to tackle these specific issues is therefore moot.

To reiterate, I shouldn't have to spell out how inequitable it is that the equity commission is expected to operate without pay considering the majority of the appointees are supposed to be from the communities that are directly impacted by systemic issues pertaining to race, gender orientation, sexuality, and disability. Pay the commission please and make sure community leaders are on that commission.

In short, I am requesting a sense of urgency to this bill by ensuring immediate action is taken through analysis of what we do know. The inclusion of an immediate equitable disbursement of COVID19 relief funds to communities of color most impacted. A specific budget for 2022-2024 and beyond; for data collection, and racial impact statements and fully funding the commission itself with pay beyond simple reimbursement, of course.