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Testimony: **Raised Bill: 6662 AN ACT DECLARING RACISM AS A
PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS AND ESTABLISHING THE
COMMISSION ON RACIAL EQUITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH**

Good Morning: Chairs Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Ranking Members Senator Miner, Representative France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of ***Raised Bill 6662 An Act Declaring Racism As A Public Health Crisis and Establishing The Commission On Racial Equity In Public Health.*** on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA).

As nurses, we recognize the long-standing disparities in health, access to health care and the inequities in health outcomes caused by systemic racism. The American Nurses Association's Membership Assembly (2020) declared "[r]acism is a public health crisis that impacts the mental, spiritual, and physical health of all people. *The Code of Ethics for Nurses with Interpretive Statements* obligates nurses to be allies and to advocate and speak up against racism, discrimination, and injustice. Consistent with this obligation, ANA has taken positions against racism, discrimination and health care disparities

and advocating for human rights.” The position statement further declared that nurses are called to action to:

- Oppose and address all forms of racism and discrimination
- Condemn brutality by law enforcement and all acts of violence
- Champion the Code of Ethics for Nurses which calls on us to recognize human dignity regardless of race, culture, creed, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, age, experience, or any aspect of identity.
- In partnership with nurses everywhere educate, advocate, and collaborate to end systemic racism, particularly within nursing.
- Advance institutional and legislative policies that promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice for all.
- Advocate for the ending of health inequities within communities and health care systems that stem from systemic racism.
- Promote deliberate and respectful dialogue, effective listening and commitment to change as a means to improve the health of all individuals and the communities where they live and work.

Systemic racism and the implicit biases that are embedded in our society and here in Connecticut contribute significantly to disparate and inequitable health outcomes for many residents of color and low income. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization and others state that the social determinants of health—healthcare access and quality, educational access and quality, social and community context, economic

stability and the neighborhood and built environment—are directly correlated with positive health outcomes. Health disparities are significant in communities with poor social determinants of health such as unstable housing, low income, unsafe neighborhoods, or substandard education.¹

Racism in Connecticut meets the criteria of a public health crisis because it affects a large number of people, threatens health over the long-term, and requires large-scale solutions. The impacts of racism on health happen because race touches all components of an individual's life, from access to housing, to healthy food options, to quality healthcare, and education.

CNA stands with the American Nurses Association Membership Assembly to denounce racism in all of its forms. More than 60,000 nurses in Connecticut, work in hospitals, clinics, schools, community centers and across communities. We strongly support HB 6662 on behalf of all the patients we serve, now and in the future. We look forward to working with you and would welcome the opportunity to serve on the Commission on Racial Equity and Public Health.

Sincerely,

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Professor Emeritus, Central Connecticut State University

¹ See <https://cdc.gov/socialdeterminants/about.html>