

**Testimony of the NAACP before the government Administration and
Elections Committee
March 12, 2008**

Senator Slossberg, Representative Caruso, Members of the Committee, my name is James E. Rawlings and I live at 9 Mumford Road in New Haven. I am the Health Chair of the Connecticut State Conference of the NAACP and I also sit on the National Health Committee of the NAACP. I am here today to speak in support of House Bill 681: An Act Establishing A Minority Health Advisory Council.

Several years ago the State Conference of the NAACP with a grant from the Connecticut Health Foundation initiated the process of producing a report on the Health Status of African Americans in Connecticut since such a report had seldom been done nationally or locally through the eyes of those impacted. The Report itself when finally completed and the data analyzed has become the catalyst for change within the minority community in Connecticut and especially within the NAACP across this state. The reasons this report has been a call to arms is because the data and findings when finally framed present a picture of two different Connecticuts. One reasonably well off and healthy and another disproportionately suffering and burdened with chronic diseases and other illness which any public health official or prudent man would deem avoidable, preventable, and unjust.

For example, in many cases the burden of these diseases impacts our babies where the infant mortality rate for unborn babies is 4.9 for Whites versus a rate of 14.3 for Blacks, nearly a 3:1 ratio. This rate relative to infant mortality is further alarming when we view other contiguous states with an Office of Minority Health and the infant mortality rate for Blacks is only 10/1,000, a nearly 40% better rate than Connecticut. Also, pediatric asthma hospital admission rates for our state are 100 for Whites versus nearly 400 for Blacks, a 4:1 ratio. Further the impact of chronic diseases such as Diabetes, Prostrate Cancer, Colon Cancer, Lung Cancer, Cardiovascular disease and its sequela of excessive amputations, blindness, and disabilities in our communities cannot be allowed to continue not to mention the excessive kidney disease amongst African Americans in our great state, again a rate exceeding 3:1.

Beyond the morbidity and mortality and suffering that goes on as we speak the cost to Connecticut is literally billions of dollars in acute care cost plus the true cost to

families, the cost of rehabilitations services and the lost of productive days and lives to our economy.

The Connecticut State Conference of the NAACP needs the support of our legislative leadership to establish this office of Minority Health as a Commission to address this silent yet embolden health disparity and social injustice issue that will only continue to act as an unattended cancer that can only be excised with this new bold approach of an Office of Minority Health dedicated to that one end.

In conclusion Connecticut State Conference of the NAACP based on our findings in our report through our state Conference President has declared this issue to be our civil rights issue of the day and we appeal to you to join our march for social equity and justice through the creation of this Office of Minority Health again as a fully viable and resourced commission.