State of Connecticut

African-American Affairs Commission
State Capitol
210 Capitol Avenue – Room 509
Hartford, CT 06106

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and other distinguished members of the Appropriations committee. My name is Subira Gordon and I am the legislative analyst for the African American Affairs Commission. The mission of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) is to improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political well-being of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut.

I am here today to oppose the elimination of the Commission of Health equity and the absorption of its duties into the department of Public Health as proposed by the Governor's budget. As I understand it the Commission on Health Equity is funded through the Department of Insurance which is funded through an assessment on insurance companies operating in the state therefore not saving money in this budget.

The Connecticut Commission on Health Equity was established to eliminate disparities in health status based on race, ethnicity, gender and linguistic ability, thereby improving the quality of health for all of the state's residents. By being a commission independent of any particular state agency, CHE is able to provide oversight and possibly provide critique of state agencies if they are not meeting the desired level of health equity. In the last year I have worked with the legislative committee of the CHE to hold a public informational forum to determine what some the of the health equity priorities are from non-profits across the state. Some of the participants where the Urban League, the Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition, The Hispanic Health Council and Foundation for community health.

While I applaud the current Commissioner from the Department of Public health for having a focus on health equity, the AAAC is not sure that this will always be the case for subsequent commissioners. Health outcomes for African Americans in the state are significantly lower than those for whites. I have been working with the Susan G Komen foundation and research continues to show that African American women are less likely to get breast cancer but more likely to die from this disease. The data for breast cancer is not an anomaly. DPH shows that the rate of singleton Low Birth Weight infants among Black/African American, non-Hispanic women (10.1%) was 2.3 times higher than that among White, For diabetes the rates for African Americans are at 14% compared to whites at 6.7% and lastly a black patient hospitalized for chest pain in Connecticut is 20 percent more likely than a white patient to be readmitted within 30 days after discharge. These are only a few statistics but it shows clearly that there are health disparities for African Americans in the state.

The AAAC is committed to working with CHE, as our Executive Director is the chair and eliminating health disparities is a part of our charge and we believe in the mission to eliminate health disparities in the state and ensure that all residents have access to equal health care.

Thank you for your time today.