

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
Written testimony from Nancy Bowden

March 26, 2021

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

My name is Nancy Bowden and I live in Bloomfield, Connecticut, a town that has perhaps the most racially diverse population in the state. I stand 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.

For at least the past year, I have been listening closely to and learning from a wide variety of social and racial equity activists and groups around the state as well as nationwide. There is no doubt in mind that racism is a public health crisis, baked into all our institutions including the health care systems. As a white woman I do not have personal experiences to share with you, but rather a deep conviction that there is massive and ongoing suffering throughout the state (and beyond) from generations of poor healthcare, poor outcomes and lack of access, all made so much worse by our history of purposeful segregation that enabled the further burdening of unhealthy air, water, land use and building structures.

No problem can be addressed without deep understanding of the root causes. For that reason, I support the establishment of a Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health, with the expectation that it will focus on the lived experiences of those most affected: Black, Spanish-speaking, Asian heritage and Indigenous. Concerted effort is called for in order to reverse the harm and promote a better, stronger path to full health equity in our cities, towns and statewide.

Connecticut has the dreadful reputation of being the state with the largest wealth gap, as well as large educational disparities. All of these measures are connected. We have “known” these things to be true for far too long to continue to do so little to repair the damage.

Therefore, 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 without further delay. Further, a report from the Commission on its activities and progress made, along with recommendations for policy changes and updates to the commission’s own annual goals should be required for the start of every legislation session.

Thank you for considering my views on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Nancy Bowden
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