

H.B. No. 6662: An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health

Appropriations Committee
Cheryl Cook, Nicole Kodak Written Testimony
March 26, 2021

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

We are the Co-chairs of the Simsbury SPIRIT Council (Simsbury Problem Identification and Resolution of Issues Together) which represent the community at large and serves as Diversity Champions to help Simsbury become more inclusive, fostering awareness, action, and a community where all voices are welcome and each and every individual can live, work, learn, and play in a safe environment with meaningful and healthy relationships. We are also residents of Simsbury and we 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.

The Town of Simsbury adopted a Resolution Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis in September, 2020. The resolution incorporates goals similar to those proposed by H.B. 6662. The SPIRIT Council is the Town organization charged with implementing, supporting and promoting those goals. The Board of Selectmen has fully supported this mission and we have begun to see more public engagement and interest in these goals. We will be collecting both quantitative and qualitative data in partnership with state experts in this field to understand resident perceptions and experiences including the areas of housing, health, food security, education and criminal justice. Additionally, Simsbury has created an Equity Council dedicated to assessing organizational issues that impact equitable access, experiences, and outcomes for Simsbury Public School students and to making recommendations that guide change efforts to eliminate persistent equity gaps in our public schools.

We **strongly support** H.B.6662, An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health. Having the state of Connecticut support this work will result in more meaningful progress and realize efficiencies.

The pandemic did not create the deep racial inequities in our state, but it can be an opportunity to address them. This bill takes steps to dismantle components of systemic racism and move Connecticut closer to health equity.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify 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.**

Sincerely,

Cheryl Cook and Nicole Kodak,
Co-Chairs, Simsbury SPIRIT Council