

**H.B. No. 6662, An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establish the Commission on Racism Equity in Public Health.**

To: Appropriations Committee

From: Mary Fleischli

Date: March 24, 2021

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

My name is Mary Fleischli and I live in West Hartford, Connecticut. I stand in **strong 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: "To declare racism as a public health crisis, establish the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health and require studies concerning the racial equity of various state programs related to such crisis."

I am a statistician and actuary. Frankly, I am stunned that we are not aggressively addressing the public health crisis of racism given the health disparity statistics. The life expectancy of a non-Hispanic Black American is **6 years lower** than the life expectancy of a non-Hispanic White American (CDC, 2021a). Black Americans are 20 percent more likely to die from heart disease than White Americans (Van Dyke et al., 2018). Black Americans are less likely to be diagnosed with cancer but have higher death rates from cancer (NIH, 2018). Black, American Indian/Alaska Native women are more than two times as likely to die during pregnancy or from a pregnancy complication than White women (Petersen et al., 2019).

The pandemic gives us another example of the disparities. In the U.S., non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanic people are three times more likely to be hospitalized and two times more likely to die from COVID (CDC, 2021b). However, of the people vaccinated with at least one dose for COVID only 8% were Black and 9% were Hispanic even though they make up 13% and 19% of the population, respectively (U.S. Census 2019; CDC, 2021c).

This bill takes steps to dismantle components of systemic racism and move Connecticut closer to health equity. I believe that there is widespread awareness in our communities of the institutional and interpersonal racism that are driving these disparities in health. **It is time we do something about it!**

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,

Mary Fleischli

References:

CDC. (2021a). Provisional Life Expectancy Estimates for January through June, 2020. *National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) Vital Statistics Rapid Release*. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/VSRR10-508.pdf>

CDC. (2021b, March 12). Risk for COVID-19 Infection, Hospitalization, and Death by Race/Ethnicity. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>

CDC. (2021c, March 24). Demographic Characteristics of People Receiving COVID-19 Vaccinations in the United States. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#vaccination-demographic>

NIH National Cancer Institute (2018). Cancer Stat Facts: Cancer Disparities. <https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/disparities.html>

Petersen EE, Davis NL, Goodman D, et al. (2019). Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Pregnancy-Related Deaths — United States, 2007–2016. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*, 68: 762–765. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6835a3>

U.S. Census. (2019). <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI725219#qf-headnote-a>

Van Dyke M, Greer S, Odom E, et al. (2018). Heart Disease Death Rates Among Blacks and Whites Aged ≥35 Years — United States, 1968–2015. *MMWR Surveill Summ*, 67(No. SS-5): 1–11. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6705a1>