

My name is Mary LaPorte and I live in Hartford and am a member of a faith community involved in the efforts of GHIAA to declare racism a public health crisis. **I am writing in support of H.B. No. 6662.**

Systemic and structural racism play a large role in determining the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and affects people's access to quality housing, education, food, transportation, political power, and other social determinants of health. Racism also has negative mental and physical health consequences such as, depression, anxiety, hypertension, preterm birth, shortened life span and poor quality of life. Understanding and addressing racism from this public health perspective is crucial to eliminating racial and ethnic inequities, and to improving opportunity and well being across communities.

I first came to Hartford in 1971 and have lived here ever since. My children attended the city's public schools. As a parent and as a citizen with family members and close friends living across the City, I viewed first hand children who suffered from lack of accessible and affordable health care. This was before the HUSKY program and finding the time and the financial resources to take children to the pediatrician or to seek health care for such debilitating conditions as diabetes and high blood pressure was overwhelming. Even with the introduction of community health centers these issues still remain.

I also could see the effects of poor diet resulting from lack of food security. I would stand in lines at the local grocers and see folks try to find a way to fill the stomachs of their families. Choices were made that clearly were based on cost alone and not always on nutritional value. Transportation made things even more difficult. Many in our urban areas do not have vehicles. Supermarkets that were miles away forced folks to rely on public transportation. Trying to carry a family's worth of groceries onto a public bus and go across town must be daunting. Yet Hartford still lacks a supermarket in the most needy parts of our city and these problems are not addressed adequately.

Racism has been declared a public health crisis in 6 states, 182 municipalities, entities, and organizations, including 20 municipalities in Connecticut. Our representatives and our community members must work together to create the legislation that will advance racial justice in our state.

Sincerely,
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