

Dear Appropriations Committee,

My name is Vanessa Lois. I am from the Bronx, New York, though I currently am a boarding student at the Ethel Walker School in Simsbury. I am writing to show my 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.

I have lived between Connecticut and New York City for the past four years at an all-girls private boarding school. At school, I have experienced racism from my peers as a mixed-race student. From hair-touching to macro-aggressions--I have endured much, and my peers have too. These encounters with racism and adversity have only been amplified by COVID-19.

Travelling between the Bronx and Simsbury has developed my perspective when it comes to the intersection between racism and public health. My community at home is predominantly Black and Latine, while Simsbury is predominantly white. These contrasts only make the discrepancies between both even clearer to me. I don't see rallies here like the ones at home in New York City, where parents have to beg for new COVID-19 policies for public schools. I don't hear outcry like the individual ones that still ring in my ears--is it because we are doing well, or because we are currently ignoring a chance to do better?

To help inform communities like Simsbury, racism must be designated as a public health issue. Racism tarnished the legacy of the United States during the Tuskegee Syphilis Study--where Black men were experimented on without treatment, Black gay men were neglected during the HIV/AIDS epidemic--these brief, but crucial correlations are meant to give a more holistic view towards the history of the United States ignoring the racist foundations of

previous public health crises. Why must public health crises occur to make us consider our dark past?

If H.B. No. 6662 were passed, there would be a heightened prerogative to target racism at the source--and, subsequently, the initiatives to relieve Black and Brown families in times of struggle would have less of a delay.

In closing, I urge you to support H.B. No. 6662 An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health.

Thank you,

Vanessa Lois