

My name is Rev. Kari Nicewander and I am a constituent of Hartford. I am also a member of the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance. But more importantly, I am the mother of a 13 year old black son, and a white woman who has seen vividly the ways that systemic racism poisons our country and our citizens.

Therefore, 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.

Racism exists on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels. It is a 400 year old disease that impacts every aspect of the structures in our country. I have seen it in the school curriculum. I have seen it in our financial institutions. I have seen it in employment. I have seen it in interactions that my son has on the playground.

When we first arrived in Connecticut, my children were taught Connecticut history in their elementary school. The only people they learned about were white. This taught them that the only people who matter in the history of our state are white. This is racist, and just one example of the ways that racism is taught and passed on in our institutions. This type of teaching impacts the mental health of people of color, and it also exacerbates the ways that racism plays out in every aspect of society, including in hiring.

A study from the National Bureau of Economics found that having a white-sounding name was the equivalent of having an additional eight years of work experience in the job hiring process. That means that people of color have an extreme disadvantage in seeking employment. This impacts not only their economic well being, but also their health, as good employment is linked with access to decent health benefits.

I do not want my son to grow up in a state where the schools teach racism, where the employers discriminate against him, where his health is negatively impacted over and over again. I am a white woman who benefits from white privilege, and I need our state to address this, so that people of color are no longer disadvantaged because of my advantage. This impacts so many people, not just my child.

H.B. 6662 is an opportunity for our state to lead the pursuit for racial justice with action. I stand with the Connecticut Campaign to Address Racism as a Public Health Crisis and ask that this bill be amended to include a review and reform of the legislative process to improve public accessibility and set in place mechanisms to determine the impact of proposed legislation on race.

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.

Sincerely,
Rev. Kari Nicewander, Senior Minister
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Hartford, CT

