

Testimony to the Connecticut General Assembly's Appropriations Committee
In Support of House Bill Number 6662
March 26, 2021

To the Honorable Senator Catherine A. Osten (Co-Chair), and the Honorable Representative Toni E. Walker (Co-Chair) and the distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Tracy Johnson Russell, I am a resident of Bethany, Connecticut. I am also an Episcopal priest, serving as Rector at St. Monica's Episcopal Church in Hartford, Connecticut. I am writing **in support of House Bill 6662: An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health.**

"When our eyes do not see the gravity of racial justice, shake us from our slumber and open our eyes, O Lord. When out of fear we are frozen into inaction, give us a spirit of bravery, O Lord..." (*Shake us from Our Slumber, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*)

Racism is the number one public health crisis facing Black Americans. The past year has brought this painful truth sharply into focus for all of us. As an African American woman, I have experienced racism my whole life, in every aspect of my life, yet the most devastating encounter with racism happened when I had an allergic reaction to an antibiotic which developed into Stevens-Johnson Syndrome (S-JS) and I had to be rushed to the emergency room of Yale New Haven Hospital. The white male nurse attending me immediately assumed that I was a drug user because of my weakened state I could barely talk to tell him otherwise. Luckily, a dermatology resident happened by and immediately saw the signs of S-JS and immediately had me moved to the ICU. If she had not been there, I would not be here today. Sadly, I know that my experience is not unique for those who inhabit black and brown bodies in this nation and in this state.

I believe that House Bill 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.

I urge you to support House Bill 6662 *An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health.*

Thank you.

Sincerely,



The Reverend Tracy Johnson Russell