

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

Appropriations Committee  
Rise Siegel  
March 26, 2021

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

My name is Rise Siegel and I live in Orange, Connecticut. I stand 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

I strongly believe that every person should have the same opportunities for education, housing, Employment and health care. In the US, people of color statistically have a shorter life span, are much more likely to develop heart disease, diabetes, cancer and asthma. Babies are more likely to be born with a lower weight and their mothers are more likely to have difficult pregnancies and Caesarian sections or forceps deliveries. These health problems are not due to genetic makeup, but are caused by environment, both physical and emotional. This is an established fact. Because POC are denied equal education and living conditions, their health and their future is impeded from the moment they are born. And, I have not yet mentioned police brutality and lack of access to health care. How totally unacceptable this is in the wealthiest country in the world.

My community has a population of about 15,000 people and there are probably fewer than 5 families of color living here. This is because it is unaffordable and there are subtle roadblocks set up making it clear they are not welcome here. Therefore, our good schools are not available. I've lived in this community for over 40 years and it hasn't changed. In fact, there are few towns in Connecticut of which I am aware that are truly integrated.

Specifically, I/we **strongly support** H.B.6662, An Act Declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health.

**I respectfully recommend** the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health reporting to be staffed to send the report to the Connecticut General Assembly on the status of the commission of activities and progress made and recommendations for policy changes and any changes to the commission's goals.

The pandemic did not create the deep racial inequities in our state, but it can be an opportunity to address them. This bill takes steps to dismantle components of systemic racism and move Connecticut closer to health equity. The pandemic did not create the racial inequities but emphasized them because POC have had a greater susceptibility to the disease and a higher morbidity. Now is the time to act, not sweep these glaring issues under the rug. Connecticut could be a leader in righting these horrible disparities.

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,  
Rise Siegel