

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

My name is Sena Wazer. I am a 17 year old climate Activist from Mansfield, CT, the co-director of Sunrise CT, and a Junior at UConn.

I am writing to you 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.

For too long the US, and the state of CT, have ignored, and tried to sweep under the rug, our country's long history of systematic racism. That must change, and this bill is a step in that direction.

Because I co-direct an organization that specifically focuses on climate action, I want to look at this area as an example of why racism is a public health crisis. In 2007, a study by Dr. Robert Bullard found that race, not economic class as many would assume, is the biggest predictor of proximity to a hazardous waste facility. Furthermore, Black children were 5x more likely to have lead poisoning from proximity to one of these facilities than white children.

Indigenous communities bear a disproportionate burden of nuclear, and other toxic waste, on their lands. Asthma rates are highest for Black and Indigenous people. The list of environmental racism examples goes on and on.

And yet this is only one very specific area. As such, I think it's clear that systematic racism is an issue, that it has a drastically negative effect on Black, Indigenous, and communities of color.

Considering all of this evidence, it's clear that racism should be designated a public health crisis. After all, it meets the requirements: it affects a large number of people, threatens health over the long term, and requires the adoption of large scale solutions.

As such, I hope that the appropriations committee will support HB 6662, and work to ensure its passage out of committee, and through the General Assembly.

Sincerely,
Sena Wazer

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Co-director of Sunrise CT

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