

Appropriations Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6662

AN ACT DECLARING RACISM AS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS AND

Title: ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION ON RACIAL EQUITY IN PUBLIC HEALTH.

Vote Date: 4/21/2021

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 3/26/2021

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Appropriations Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

To address racial health disparities and inequalities by declaring racism a public health crisis and establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[State of Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities](#) expressed strong support for the bill. CHRO pointed out the disparities that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the inequities of the healthcare, education, and criminal justice systems. Additionally, CHRO noted that Connecticut must join other states and communities who have declared racism a public health crisis and be a leader.

[Acting Commissioner Diedre S. Gifford, Department of Health](#) supported the intent of the bill with suggested modifications that pertain to the use of appropriate terminology. The Acting Commissioner noted that it is not within the realm of possibility to eliminate health disparities, but it is possible to reduce disparities. Section 2 requires the Commission to develop a strategic plan and make recommendations. DPH is the lead convener for the Healthy CT: State Health Improvement Coalition which developed the Healthy CT 2025: State Health Improvement Plan. DPH is prepared to support the Commission with this plan that aims for equity and the elimination of structural racism at each level. Section 5 required DPH to conduct a study on the development and implementation of a recruitment and retention program for health care workers in the state who are people of color. The Department is concerned about available resources and timeframe. DPH recommends engaging the healthcare sector through their trade associations to perform this assessment.

[Victoria Veltri, Executive Director- Office of Health Strategy](#) offered support of this bill and provided two examples of how OHS continues to address disparities highlighted by the pandemic including their work on the Governor's Executive Order No. 5 and introducing legislation to enhance and normalize the data hospitals and providers that participate in the Health Information Exchange collect from patients. OHS stated that they were ready to increase public transparency about how hospitals are providing community benefits to individuals within their respective service areas. OHS recognized that the commission must consider the impact of social determinants of health on policy and develop a strategy for the state to guide our ongoing efforts to eliminate inequities. OHS is concerned about their ability to hire and provide support for the commission, but remains supportive of the bill's intent and dedicated to working to resolve operational challenges.

[Shawn T. Wooden, State Treasurer- Office of the Treasurer](#) offered support of this bill stating that racism and health are intertwined. He cited that this pandemic has exacerbated racial inequalities and highlighted the fact that racism in public health is a life and death issue. Additionally, he cited that negative police interactions can cause harm and stress leading to poor mental health in those experiencing interactions. He acknowledged this bill as an important step forward in understanding the full impact of racism on health.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

[Kai Addae, Resident of New Haven](#) communicated the steps that the City of New Haven has taken to declare racism a public health crisis and urged the state to do the same.

[Morel Alexander, LMFT, et. al, CEDEA](#) recognized that systemic racism produces inequities in physical and mental health, and also recommended the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments.

[Colette Anderson, Executive Director- CT Women's Consortium](#) emphasized that since racism is a determinant of health and causes inequities, it must be recognized as a public health crisis. Additionally, she pointed out the importance of delivering trauma-informed care as racist policies traumatize.

[Stephen Anderson, President- CSEA SEIU Local 2001](#) cited that people of color are victimized by systems that institutionalize racism and continue to fall behind as a result, hence the need to declare racism a public health crisis.

[Christopher Atchley, Hamden Democratic Town Committeeman](#) cited the high Black maternity and infant death rates and several social determinants of health as the most important reason to declare racism a public health crisis. He also recommended the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments.

[Catherine Bailey, Resident of West Hartford](#) noted that racism must be addressed because it is an institutional issue that creates drastic health disparities. She also mentioned that by declaring racism a public health crisis, the CGA will signal its commitment and seriousness to addressing the crisis.

[Sister Cecilia Baranowski, Resident of Wolcott](#) cited poor public housing conditions for people of color that have negative health impacts as a reason to support this bill.

[Kenneth Barela, CEO- Hispanic Health Council](#) emphasized the ways that racism impacts health from infant death rates to asthma and urges the legislature to join at least 185 other entities that have declared racism a public health crisis.

[Alan Benford, Resident of Manchester](#) lead with his Unitarian Universalist faith's main principles as his reason for being so compelled to work to eradicate racism. He noted that understanding and addressing racism from a public health perspective is key to eliminating racial inequalities.

[Samantha Bernstein-Naples, Resident of Hartford](#) drew upon her experience living in Hartford all her life and seeing the impact that racism has had on members of her community as a reason to support this bill. Additionally, she cited the negative physical and mental health implications of racism that can be addressed through establishing this commission.

[Black and Brown United in Action](#) cited barriers to economic growth for people of color, pay disparities, and being denied opportunities as main reasons to support this bill.

[Ruby Blackmon, President- AFSCME, Council 4 Local 196](#) pointed out that COVID-19 has only amplified the racial disparities and inequities that exist in Connecticut, and that this bill needs to address the state's history of racist laws and policies.

[Nancy Bowden, Resident of Bloomfield](#) called on this bill to establish a commission that focuses on the lived experiences of Black people, Spanish speakers, Asian Americans, and Indigenous persons.

[Darryl Brackeen Jr., New Haven Alderman](#) spoke upon his experience of working in New Haven to declare racism a public health crisis. His recommendations include addressing food insecurity, increasing minority contractors, supporting Black and Brown businesses, and working with community partners.

[Linda Bronstein, Resident of West Hartford](#) stated that understanding and addressing racism from a public health perspective is crucial to improving the well-being of communities of color.

[Thomas Buckley, UConn School of Pharmacy Professor](#) cited The Justice Collaborative Institute's "Racism is a Public Health Crisis. Here's how to Respond", which states that governments declaring racism a public health crisis is an important first step and provides guidance moving forward.

[Kathleen Callahan, National Association of Social Workers](#) acknowledged that racism is a social determinant of health which causes inequity and disparate outcomes. Additionally, NASW/CT emphasized the importance of cultural humility in the bill.

[Ruth Canovi, CT Director of Advocacy- American Lung Association](#) cited that Black and Brown communities bear a greater burden of lung disease than white communities, pointing at social determinants of health and their impact.

[Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, Executive Director- The Connecticut Oral Health Initiative](#) cited disparities in oral health including that Black children are 7.34 times more likely than white

children to need urgent dental care. In addition, COHI recommends the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments.

[Supriyo B. Chatterjee, West Hartford Resident](#) pointed out the need for a revised framework for social determinants of health that can address racism, and that the first step is creating the commission.

[Stephanye Clarke, Program Officer- Community Foundation of Eastern CT](#) stated that the pandemic can be an opportunity to address the deep racial inequities that have plagued our state.

[Collaborative Center for Justice](#) expressed their strong support as a faith-based institution that wants to see the state decrease racist disparities in criminal justice outcomes, health, and drug enforcement.

[Cheryl Cook, Simsbury SPIRIT Council](#) urged Connecticut to declare racism a public health crisis as they have done in Simsbury to dismantle components of systemic racism and move Connecticut closer to health equity.

[Suzi Craig, Chief Strategy Officer- Mental Health Connecticut](#) applauded the bill including cultural humility and addressing racism as a public health crisis. MHC recommends adding DMHAS Commissioner as a required appointment and adding right-fit service utilization as a metric to measure success.

[Connecticut State Medical Society](#) expressed support of this bill and its addressing health equity and disparities in healthcare. CSMS recommended that language should be incorporated to include participation by a physician member of CSMS.

[Connecticut Women's Education and Legal Fund](#) pointed to the COVID-19 pandemic as an example of how racism is linked to inequality in a healthcare and health disparities. CWEALF supports creating structures to embed anti-racism in policymaking with the goal of moving to end racism in our state.

[San De Min, East Hartford Resident](#) expressed belief that legislators would be better equipped to handle issues like generational poverty and racial disparities in healthcare if this bill were to pass.

[Linda A. Demikat, Hartford Resident](#) cited her experience as a public school teacher and administrator, specifically how she saw negative health impacts in students of color, including mental health.

[Donna DiCello, Psy.D, North Haven Resident](#) reflected upon her experiences as a mental health services provider, and described the devastating effects that racism has had on the mental health of people from Black, Brown, and Asian communities. She recommends that the bill include staffing for racial impact assessments.

[Shermya Dover-John, Avon Resident](#) referenced the quiet culture of racism in Connecticut, and stated that the support of legislators would help to influence change in communities of color.

[Amy Dowell, Connecticut State Director- Education Reform Now](#) noted that we need a proactive, strategic approach to combating racism in order to move to achieve educational equity for students. She pointed out that the education metrics will benefit students greatly.

[Marcia DuFore, Executive Director- Amplify, Inc.](#) reflected upon Amplify's work partnering with UConn Health Disparities Institute and Ministerial Health Fellowship and organizing an event to talk about how to address behavioral health during COVID-19 including racial disparities. Amplify suggested that since their community partners have continued to meet, that they should be considered an important resource for the Commission's work.

[Paul Dworkin, MD, Pediatrician and Executive Vice President for Community Child Health- Connecticut Children's Medical Center](#) stated that the Commission's work should include children's health issues in its work and subsequent recommendations.

[Antonia Edwards](#) spoke to experience of family facing discrimination in obtaining medical and mental health services as a reason that this bill needs to be passed.

[Tekisha Dwan Everette, Executive Director- Health Equity Solutions](#) recommended that the Commission employ a health equity in all policies approach and allocate funding for 2 staff dedicated to conduct racial and ethnic impact statements.

[Rev. Curtis Farr](#) recommended that the bill include a review and reform of the legislative process to improve public accessibility and set in place mechanisms to determine impact of proposed legislation on race.

[Lisa Fay, Resident of Fairfield](#) reflected upon her experience seeing inequities in the childhood early education field as a main reason this bill should pass. She recommends including staffing to create racial impact assessments.

[Patrick Feeley, Yale Student](#) reflected upon how racial disparities in access to safe and affordable housing, education, food, hiring, opportunities, etc. impact people of color, and that this bill is urgent and overdue.

[Celina Fernandez-Ayala, New Haven Resident](#) recognized the bill as a great starting point to address racism in the state and recommended that the bill include requirements around culturally humility-oriented training or education for healthcare professionals.

[Terry Fitzgerald, Enfield Resident](#) acknowledged the need for the state to address underlying socioeconomic gaps which drive disparities and recommended that the 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.

[Kathleen Flaherty, Executive Director- CT Legal Rights Project](#) expressed support for the bill, but offered additional recommendations including reforming the Psychiatric Security Review Board and requiring collection and reporting of race, ethnicity, and language data when it comes to forced psychiatric treatment.

[Mary Fleischli, West Hartford Resident](#) cited the statistic that the life expectancy of a non-Hispanic Black American is 6 years lower than the life expectancy of a non-Hispanic White American as a stark disparity and reason why this bill should pass to take steps to dismantle components of systemic racism.

[Rev. Larissa Forsythe, Glastonbury Resident](#) reflected on moving to Connecticut and thinking racism would not be as prevalent, but remains hopeful that legislators will pass this bill and act to make changes to address racial inequities.

[Sarah Fox, Director of Policy- CT Coalition to End Homelessness](#) emphasized the link between housing and health, and that has been exacerbated by the pandemic. CCEH urged legislators to take this important first step in ending systemic racism.

[Lauren Garrett, Hamden Resident](#) cited that Black people are 10% more likely than white people to be infected by COVID-19, however, Black people are almost 3 times more likely to be hospitalized and almost 2 times more likely to die, according to the CDC. She stated that COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting Black people, and passing this bill can be the difference between life and death in the future.

[Shirley Girouard, Branford Resident](#) reflected upon her experiences witnessing the impact of racism as a nurse and health policy consultant. She recommends the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments on proposed policies.

[Kiley Gosselin, Executive Director- Partnership for Strong Communities](#) cited the disproportionate representation of people of color currently facing eviction, experiencing housing instability, and homelessness and advocated for accountability and action in next steps.

[Liz Gustafson, State Director- NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut](#) highlighted that a harsh light has been cast on existing racial disparities and health inequities which have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. NARAL Pro-Choice Connecticut recommends that this bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments on proposed policies.

[Annie and Neil Hornish, Suffield Residents](#) acknowledge that the data showing race-based health disparities is overwhelming, and this bill is a step in the right direction.

[Sonya Jelks, Deputy Majority Leader- Meriden City Council](#) emphasized the need for the state to recognize racism as a public health crisis to address the problem by embedding anti-racist principles in the operations of our state government. She recommends a diverse representation on the commission, a Health Equity in All Policies approach, and funding for staffing to conduct racial impact assessments on future proposed legislation.

[Melinda Johnson, Director of Community Engagement and Advocacy- YWCA Hartford Region](#) stated she stood with the Connecticut Campaign to Address Racism as a Public Health Crisis and asks that the 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.

[Eleta Jones, West Hartford Resident](#) stated that understanding and addressing racism from a public health perspective is crucial to eliminating racial and ethnic inequities and to improving opportunities. She also added that she requests that the 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.

[James Keitt](#) shared his own experience and the experience of his family dealing with racism in education, environmental hazards, and medicine. He emphasized that Black people in underserved communities are dying, and action needs to be taken now.

[Jan Kritzman, Newington Resident](#) emphasized the importance of passing this bill because young women of color can be diagnosed with late-stage breast cancer. She mentioned the need to improve health outcomes for women of color.

[Anneliese Lapedes, Niantic Resident](#) cited Connecticut's poor ranking in health disparities as a reason to pass this bill. She also recommended the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments on proposed policies.

[Mary LaPorte, Hartford Resident](#) cited food insecurity and health disparities as reasons this bill needs to be passed.

[Darla Larson, Willimantic Resident](#) supports the bill, but wants it to go further to create meaningful change by clearly defining the problem, mandating collection of standardized, transparent, accessible, and locally-based disaggregated data throughout the state, creating accountability procedures and mechanisms, setting sufficient and substantial appropriations, and taking immediate action and providing immediate COVID-19 relief.

[David Lavery, Staff Attorney- Connecticut Fair Housing Center](#) noted that people of color face systemic barriers to safe and affordable housing which causes negative health outcomes. He also believes that the bill should be amended to include tools to empower commissioners to reach the targets contained within the bill.

[Rev. Isaac Lawson, Associate Pastor- Immanuel Congregational Church, United Church of Christ](#) stated that the root causes of marginalization need to be addressed.

[Dr. Susan Levine, Associate Professor of Medicine- UConn](#) shared that she sees the disproportionate health inequities faced by people of color everyday at UConn Health Center. She sees declaring racism as a public health crisis a first step.

[Sarah Lewis, Vice President of Health Equity- Hartford Healthcare](#) highlighted the work that Hartford Healthcare has done to embed a culture of equity and inclusion across their system and would welcome the chance to partner with the state in this effort.

[Vanessa Liles, Bridgeport Resident](#) pointed out the systemic racism that the low-income public housing community faces, and that this bill can take steps to change those outcomes by dismantling components of systemic racism.

[David Liscinsky, Glastonbury Resident](#) emphasized the importance of access to quality housing, food, education, healthcare, etc. in addressing systemic racism.

[Daniel Livingston, Chief Negotiator- SEBAC](#) stated that the pandemic shines a brighter light on racial disparities in health, and that this can be overcome with long-term committed efforts from public institutions and communities. SEBAC advocated for the passing of this bill to find active anti-racist solutions for the future of Connecticut.

[Vanessa Lois, Ethel Walker Student of Simsbury](#) cited her experience as being from two different communities, one predominantly white and the other predominantly Black and Latinx, and seeing the stark differences in how racism ravages communities of color. She believes that the passage of this bill would lead to targeting racism at the source.

[Sal Luciano, President- AFL-CIO](#) noted that only when we recognize a problem and name it, can we begin the work to fix it, and that declaring racism a public health crisis is the first of several steps to make Connecticut more equitable for residents of color. AFL-CIO recommended the addition of the Commissioner of Labor to the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health.

[Dr. Velandy Manohar, Haddam Resident](#) cited posts on his website that relate to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as it relates to the life and death matters that plague our society when it comes to racism.

[William Marut, Glastonbury Resident](#) stated that his involvement with the Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance has raised his level of awareness regarding the inequities in public health across racial lines in Connecticut. He asks that the 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.

[Kelly McConney Moore, Interim Senior Policy Council- ACLU Connecticut](#) cited the importance of this bill by pointing out the racial disparity that Black residents are four times as likely as white residents to have diabetes-related lower-extremity amputations and are twice as likely to die from diabetes. The ACLU emphasized the importance of the commission to dive into the task of reducing racism in the environment, affordable housing, infrastructure, public health, health care access, etc.

[William McCullough, Senior Pastor- Russel Temple CME Church of Bridgeport](#) recognized that racism plays into every aspect of the lives of children of color from their home to their food and the safety of their neighborhood and emphasized the need for equity now.

[Ella McQuaid, Fairfield Resident](#) noted that exploring racism in public health benefits all people in our society to be healthier as a whole.

[Barbara Mechler, Southbury Resident](#) called upon her experience advocating for racial justice with Justice Southbury and hearing stories of discrimination and racial inequities. She stated that this commission will help every town in Connecticut.

[Laura Minor, Bristol Resident](#) cited her experience working at Wheeler Clinic and dealing with struggling youth with trauma, addiction, etc. She noted she has seen examples of life threatening inequities in our systems that need to be addressed now.

[Aaron Morabito, Rocky Hill Resident](#) recommended the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health reporting requirements 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.

[Sofia Morales, Program Manager Research and Evaluation- Community Alliance for Research and Engagement](#) noted that racism meets all three criteria of a public health crisis and needs to be addressed as such.

[K. Morris](#) cited pollution, infant mortality, high rates of emergency room visits, medical debt, police shootings, and COVID cases and deaths as reasons to urgently pass this bill.

[Michele Mudrick, Legislative Advocate- Southern New England Conference United Church of Christ](#) cited pregnancy related deaths, lack of primary doctors/care, and emergency room visits for people of color as reasons to pass this bill.

[Rev. Kari Nicewander, Senior Minister- Immanuel Congregational Church of Hartford](#) stated that racism exists on a personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional level that impacts every aspect of the structures in America. She urges legislators to support this bill to create a better world for her son and other children and people of color.

[Tom Nicholas, Vice President- Connecticut Education Association](#) stated that CEA members see the impact of racism every day in school-aged children through trauma, disinvestment of communities of color, and public health disparities. CEA also supports the establishment of a Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health to study the impact of racial disparities.

[Elaine O'Keefe, Easton Resident](#) reflected upon learning of the profound effect of systemic racism as a public health professional. She recognized that this bill is a first step to change the way our state government works, to embed anti-racism principles in state level decision making processes, and to facilitate anti-racist policy making at all levels.

[Michael Oretade](#) was supportive of the bill with proposed changes including the addition of definitions of systemic and institutional racism, public health crisis, and social determinants of health.

[Frances G. Padilla, Universal Health Care Foundation of Connecticut](#) cited structural barriers and health disparities including maternal and infant death rates, inequities in cancer, and struggles with mental health as reasons to act now to examine the state's policies and move to address systemic racism.

[Rev. Josh Pawelek, Minister- Unitarian Universalist Society](#) stated that social determinants of health including access to healthy, fresh food, access to decent education, access to affordable housing, access to secure employment, and access to quality, affordable, culturally-sensitive health care should be enough for people to realize that racism is a public health crisis that needs to be acted upon.

[Deb Polun, Executive Director- Connecticut Association for Community Action](#) cited CAFCA's vital work with Community Action Agencies and several health disparities including high rates of asthma, diabetes, and infant mortality as reasons to support this bill.

[Ann Pratt, Director of Organizing – CT Citizen Action Group](#) strongly supported the bill with the recommendation that the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments on proposed policies. This will enable the Connecticut General Assembly to evaluate the potential for policies to promote equity or have a disparate impact.

[Monique Price-Taylor, Program Manager- Corporation for Supportive Housing](#) strongly supported the bill and recommended that the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments on proposed policies.

[Gretchen Raffa, Senior Director of Public Policy, Advocacy, and Organizing- Planned Parenthood of Southern New England](#) cited that the pandemic has continued to spotlight inequities in our health system. Planned Parenthood knows that racism is a public health crisis that needs to be addressed, and recommends the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments on proposed policies.

[Carol Reimers, President- League of Women Voters of CT](#) cited food insecurity, maternal mortality rates, diabetes, and asthma as disparities that make it clear that this bill is vital to addressing racism.

[Rev. Tracy Johnson Russell, Rector- St. Monica's Episcopal Church](#) cited racism as the number one public health crisis facing Black Americans, and stated that this bill is an opportunity for the state to lead. She also requested 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.

[Sana Shah, Chief of Staff- Connecticut Voices for Children](#) supported this legislative effort to declare racism a public health crisis with amendments including clear definition of the problem, mandated state and municipal data collection, inclusion of equitable distribution of COVID-19 relief funds, and clear articulation on the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health's purpose and membership.

[Jay E. Sicklick, Deputy Director- Center for Children's Advocacy](#) emphasized the importance of a Health In All Policies approach as espoused by the CDC.

[Rise Siegel, Orange Resident](#) acknowledged the barriers to people of color living in Orange and communities across the state because few towns are truly integrated and recommended 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.

[Wendy Waithe Simmons, Executive Director- New Haven Children's Ideal Learning District](#) shared support for the bill because the time is right to make Connecticut an opportunity state for all children while strategically addressing the historical impact of structural racism.

[Kristianna Smith, New Britain Resident](#) stated that this bill offers the state of Connecticut the opportunity to start investing in its Black and Brown communities similarly to how we invest in our retirement plans and that the bill takes steps to immediately address the direct impact White Supremacy and Institutional Racism has on our state. She recommends the

Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health reporting requirements 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.

[Robin Sparks, Executive Director- End Hunger Connecticut!](#) stated that EHC! believes the state needs to declare racism a public health crisis to more adequately address these systemic health inequalities that result from food insecurity.

[Rev. Dr. Rochelle A. Stackhouse, Hamden Resident](#) shared that addressing racism from a public health perspective is crucial to eliminating racial and ethnic inequities, and improving opportunity and well-being across communities. Additionally, she asked that this bill be amended to include a review and reform of the legislative process to improve public accessibility, and to set in place mechanisms to determine the impact of proposed legislation on race.

[Anne Stanback, Greater Hartford Interfaith Action Alliance](#) shared that in her work she saw first-hand that racism affects people's access to quality housing, education, food, transportation, political power, and other social determinants of health. She urged Connecticut to lead the pursuit for racial justice with action.

[Alison Tyliszczak, Director of Maternal Infant Health Initiatives- Connecticut at March of Dimes](#) stated that this bill is a necessary and strong step in the right direction to address racism, and recommended the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health be staffed appropriately and that it send regular reports to the Connecticut General Assembly on the status of the commission activities and progress made and recommendations for policy changes.

[Jenna Van Donselaar, Willimantic Resident](#) noted that declaring racism a public health crisis is a crucial starting point for acknowledging the role racism plays in our state and working towards correcting the harm racism has caused to our communities. She recommended the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments on proposed policies. This will enable the Connecticut General Assembly to evaluate the potential for policies to promote equity or have a disparate impact.

[Sena Wazer, Co-Director- Sunrise CT](#) cited racial health disparities related to the environment as main reasons to pass this bill.

[Janee Woods Weber, President- PoliticaCT](#) cited negative impacts of racism on mental and physical health with stark disparities. PoliticaCT requests that the bill be amended to include a review and reform of the legislative process to improve public accessibility, mechanisms to determine the impact of proposed legislation on race, and staffing to create timely racial impact assessments on proposed policies, which will enable the Connecticut General Assembly to evaluate the potential for policies to promote equity or to have a disparate impact.

[Alison Weir, Policy Advocate and Attorney- Greater Hartford Legal Aid](#) stated support and appreciates the multidimensional approach to address the deeply rooted disparities in public health for the BIPOC residents of Connecticut. They believe publicly declaring racism a public

health crisis and establishing an interagency commission to address the issue with a stated and measurable goal is a step in the right direction.

[Katherine Whitney, West Hartford Resident](#) stated support for this bill and that Connecticut has a moral obligation to address the long-standing effects of racism in the public health system, as well as the immediate effects of the environmental racism that creates health problems which disproportionately affect people of color.

[Mary Jane Williams, Senior Policy Advisor- Connecticut Nurses Association](#) noted that CNA recognized the long-standing disparities in health, access to health care and the inequities in health outcomes caused by systemic racism. CNA supports this bill and would welcome the opportunity to serve on the Commission on Racial Equity and Public Health.

[Women's Health Connecticut](#) stated that as Ob-Gyns, they see the systemic racism towards people of color in their daily lives while treating patients. Their mission is to provide better care and outcomes, and needs legislators to support this bill in order to achieve that.

[Brittney Yancy, Vernon Resident](#) cited various health disparities that exist because of racism toward Black Americans. She recommends that the Commission's work should employ a robust intersectional framework and that we must define racism and systemic racism in the bill in order to address police brutality, redlining, Black maternal crisis, criminalization of our Black children, poverty, the wealth gap, and health disparities.

[Mary Yordon, AFTCT Divisional Vice President](#) cited that educational community struggles to provide enough supports to all students to overcome the many challenges they are facing, among those being racism. She provided her support because this bill provides for the possibility of a wide range of study to develop a comprehensive strategic plan to eliminate health disparities and inequities across sectors.

[Corona Zhang, West Hartford Resident](#) cited racial health inequities in maternal health, environmental health, infectious disease, and mental health. They offered support for this bill that seriously addresses racial inequities, and recommended that the bill include staffing to create racial impact assessments on all proposed policies.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed

Reported by: Allie Kazlauskas

Date: April 28, 2021