



Testimony of

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Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee, on behalf of University Hospitals, our physicians, nurses and employees, and more importantly, the community we serve, I am pleased to submit this testimony for the record. Specifically, I write in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14.

My name is Margaret Larkins-Pettigrew, and I am the Edgar B. Jackson Jr., MD, Endowed Chair in Clinical Excellence & Diversity at University Hospitals Center for Clinical Excellence and Diversity. University Hospitals is a Cleveland-based super-regional health system that serves more than 1.2 million patients in 15 Northeast Ohio counties. The hub of our 18-hospital system is University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center, a 1,032-bed academic medical center that encompasses UH Rainbow Babies & Children's Hospital; UH Seidman Cancer Center; and a medical-surgical complex boasting world-renowned excellence in every specialty. Our physician leaders and other experts are widely sought sources of thoughtful commentary and expertise on a host of medical and health-care topics.

University Hospitals supports the Ohio Senate's Concurrent Resolution that declares racism a public health crisis. In addition to the crisis declaration, we appreciate that the resolution lays out 15 other objectives, including forming a working group to promote racial equity; calling for tools for state agencies to actively engage communities; and pursuing the time, money and staffing to accomplish the resolution's policy goals. Our health system sees firsthand how racism disproportionately impacts the health of minority communities, which manifests in higher rates of chronic diseases and infant mortality, and lower life expectancies.

UH is an active partner in addressing issues identified by the Cuyahoga County Community Health Assessment, which focuses on structural racism as a critical contributor to unfair health conditions and outcomes. Over the past decade, UH has provided more than \$3 billion in Community Benefit through targeted programs and initiatives.

UH efforts to address health care disparities include the UH Rainbow Center for Women & Children in MidTown and the UH Otis Moss Jr. Health Center in Fairfax, established in close partnership with the Olivet Institutional Baptist Church. These centers improve access to high-quality patient care for residents of our urban communities.

To improve access to healthy fresh foods and reduce food insecurity for Cleveland's urban minorities, UH supported Dave's Market in opening its MidTown location and has recently established the Food for Life Market at UH Otis Moss.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, UH has conducted outreach to predominantly African American neighborhoods that have been impacted by the virus at higher rates than other communities. We continue to work with government and community leaders on providing clinical support and information about prevention and safety.

Since high rates of poverty contribute to health disparities, UH has worked consistently over many years on local and minority job creation. Our support for Evergreen Cooperatives is an example of innovative approaches to job creation and self-sufficiency.

We also believe that UH has a responsibility to promote positive change in the community by serving as a model environment for cultural diversity and inclusion, which are UH core values. Through our counselor-supported educational program, Step Up to UH, and available tuition assistance, UH employees are enabled to grow and advance in their careers.

In supporting the Senate Concurrent Resolution, UH welcomes broader recognition of the impacts of racism on the health of our community. We pledge to work with you to continue and expand our efforts to provide quality health care, improve access to care and provide education as ways to eliminate health care disparities.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony to the Committee. I appreciate everything that you and your colleagues in the General Assembly are doing to combat racism, and respectfully request you support Senate Concurrent Resolution 14.

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