

Testimony of Gregory Lam, MD  
In support of SCR 14  
Ohio Senate Health Committee  
June 23, 2020

Dear Sen. Burke and Members of the Senate Health Committee,

Systemic racism permeates our society.

As a physician I can attest that racism adversely affects the health of our minority populations and constitutes a public health crisis. The COVID19 pandemic provides the latest example of how racism affects public wellbeing: because Asian Americans experienced repeated indiscriminate attacks for “causing” the coronavirus, many were afraid to wear masks in public fearing that it would further stigmatize them. This, in turn, further propagated the spread amongst the general population. Many Asian Americans declined to seek care due to fear of attacks or discrimination, thus further jeopardizing their health and the health of their communities, workplaces and places of worship. Not surprisingly, rates of depression and anxiety have skyrocketed.

Racial injustice, however, goes further than the current coronavirus problem. Systemic racism has led to long-standing disparities in access to food, housing, education, safety, transportation and wealth. Direct consequences of these inequities are manifested in the worsened life expectancy, lower birth-rates, barriers to healthcare, and the inability to obtain prescription drugs seen in ethnic populations. Over time racism fundamentally contributes to chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, and asthma. And during crises such as COVID19, the disproportionate health effects of these chronic conditions are only magnified.

Racism is undoubtably a public health crisis. I would urge the committee to join the multitude of cities and organizations across the country who have already recognized this fundamental threat to the care of our citizens.

Sincerely,

Gregory Lam, MD