



The Most Worshipful

PRINCE HALL GRAND LODGE OF OHIO

.....Free and Accepted Masons.....

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“Building on The Firm Foundation of Our Historic Legacy

Proponent Testimony in Support of Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 14

To: Chairman Burke, distinguished members of the Senate Health, Human Services and and Medicaid Committee, good morning. I am Chester C. Christie. I am the Retired Director of Human Resources for the City of Columbus. Today I am herein my role as Grand Master of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio, Free and Accepted Masons. Our Organization is comprised of approximately 3500 members representing 47 Lodges disbursed throughout Ohio in cities ranging in size from Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland, to Lima, Elyria, Chillicothe, and Portsmouth. We are an Organization predominantly composed of African American Men. Our membership includes a broad cross section of virtually every profession or discipline that you can think of, and we are a reflection of the socio-economic diversity of this great state of Ohio.

For these and many other reasons, I firmly believe that our collective voice is a relevant one and that the opinions that you have so graciously afforded me the opportunity to express on behalf of our Organization are an accurate reflection of the perspective and the sentiments of a significant percentage of the citizens represented by you as members of the General Assembly. And, I thank you for the opportunity to appear here this morning.

I proudly stand before you this morning on behalf of the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 14. To declare racism a public health crisis and to ask the Governor to establish a working group to promote racial equity in Ohio.

We as a Country are facing a double crisis. We are fighting to slow the spread of the Coronavirus and to adapt our everyday lives to conform to social distancing protocols, the use of face coverings, personal protective equipment, vigorous hand washing, and other measures to safeguard our health and well-being. Our Country, for the most part, has recognized the existence of this pandemic and has taken significant measures to at least



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begin to address the ravages and devastatingly deadly impact of its continued spread; with the initial goal being containment then ultimately, with proper focus steadfast commitment and the application of necessary human and financial resources, its total eradication.

We are also facing the crisis of systemic racism manifested in the killing of George Floyd and many other Black and Brown People at the hands of Police. Racism is a public health crisis as much as, if not more so than the Coronavirus. Racism is a longstanding systemic structure in this Country. As African Americans, we see racism and discrimination every day in all aspects of life, including housing, education, the criminal justice system, and employment. And it is amplified during the COVID-19 Pandemic as communities of color that already face systemic barriers to accessing affordable and effective health care, now also face inequities in everything from a greater burden of COVID-19 cases, to less access to testing, treatment and care.

African American women face higher rates of maternal death. African Americans have the highest death rate and the shortest survival of any racial and ethnic group in the U S for most Cancers. And an emerging body of research demonstrates that racism is a social determinant of Health and leads to disparities in health outcomes, and the social, economic, educational and environmental inequities that contribute to them.

There is no silver bullet or quick fix. The infestation of racism has persisted for generations in our nation. It must be dismantled through brutally honest conversations, and significant changes in policies and practices.

The ravages of racism are aptly reflected in each of the Whereas statements incorporated in the proposed Concurrent Resolution. Now is the time for the General Assembly to support the establishment of a working group to address the issues outlined. We may never have a better opportunity. The question is whether there is the political will and the desire to finally honestly address the issue head on with a sincere commitment and purpose of eradicating this plague that, even more than the Coronavirus, has ravaged our nation.

We, the members of the MWPHGL of Ohio Free and Accepted Masons stand firmly with the sponsors of this Resolution in the belief that racism is an ongoing public health crisis that



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needs our attention and your collective attention now! It is our prayer that you agree and that you will reflect that agreement by adopting this resolution.

Thank you for your attention and the opportunity to provide proponent testimony

Respectfully,

Chester C. Christie

Chester C. Christie, #7

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