

### **SCR 14: Racism is a Public Health Crisis**

Thank you Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee. My name is Dara Adkison and I'm here to testify in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14) declaring that racism is a public health crisis. I'm a resident of the Township of Columbia Station in Lorain County, a Candidate for the Ohio House of Representatives in District 57, and the President of the Cleveland Stonewall Democrats.

People are protesting across Ohio from the biggest cities to the smallest townships. Ohio is long overdue for public acknowledgement of the disparities that exist between white people and African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islander Americans, Indigenous People and other minority groups. Ohio is ready for this acknowledgment and ready for change.

Studies have proven time and time again that racism independent of all other factors is a social determinant of health. The pandemic has brought to light what many Ohioans already knew: that racism is a powerful force still operating in 2020. Black patients are significantly less likely to be listened to both about what their symptoms are and the severity of their symptoms. Many healthcare professionals still believe wrongly that black people have a different pain tolerance than white patients. These problems appreciably hurt the health outcomes of Black people and are only further exacerbated in a pandemic. We must address the public health crisis that is racism, now.

My district is 91.4% white according to 2018 census data. Many told me that I should not speak out about race because of this ratio. I respectfully disagree; all people deserve representation whether you are one of the 113,102 or the 10,629. Gerrymandering was designed specifically for disenfranchising minorities, and District 57 was designed with this ratio in mind. Let us take this important step here today to show that Black Lives Matter across all of Ohio!

Thank you to the committee and the sponsors of this resolution; and to Sen. Williams and Sen. Craig for giving me the opportunity to testify.