

Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony. My name is Allison, and I'm a 4th-year medical student at The Ohio State University pursuing Obstetrics and Gynecology. The following are my own personal views and opinions, and do not reflect those of my institution. I would like to express my utmost support for Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14), declaring that racism is a public health crisis in the state of Ohio.

Throughout my time in medical school, I have personally seen how men and women of color face disproportionate barriers in accessing healthcare. I have heard stories from black patients of providers not listening to symptoms or complaints. I personally remember talking with a black female patient who was told that her chest pain was just "anxiety" and not further worked up at an OSH. Given the disproportionate impact of heart disease on black women, this was especially troubling.

While preparing to enter my chosen field of Obstetrics and Gynecology, I believe it is my duty to advocate for the women who will be my future patients. The statistics for expectant Black mothers are deeply unsettling, and there is truly a crisis of Black maternal mortality. In the state of Ohio, Black women die from complications related to childbirth at three times the rate of White women¹. Between the years of 2008 and 2016, Black women accounted for only 17% of women giving birth, but accounted for 34% of pregnancy-related deaths in Ohio². This is just one field of healthcare; there are so many other specialties that reflect similar statistics for Black patients, such as disproportionate effects of heart disease stated earlier. The coronavirus pandemic has further magnified health disparities the black community faces. **The data does not lie, and it is imperative that this data drives policy decisions.** The lives of my future patients simply cannot be up for debate, and resolutions like SCR 14 are needed to promote long-term change that will save lives.

Thank you, members of the committee and sponsors Senator Sandra Williams and Senator Hearcel Craig, for allowing my testimony to be heard on this matter.

Respectfully,

Allison Akers, MS4
The Ohio State University College of Medicine