

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

Thank you for allowing us to provide this testimony. We represent law student members of the If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice chapter at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law. We would like to express our support for Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14) declaring racism as a public health crisis in the state of Ohio.

Currently, Black people in the United States are sicker and die sooner than others whose only difference is the color of their skin.¹ In Ohio, this difference has been acutely felt by members of the black community. For example, black mothers in Ohio die from complications related to childbirth at three times the rate of white women.² Currently, in the wake of COVID-19, black Ohioans are disproportionately infected with the virus.³

Beyond the increased incidence of disease and higher mortality rates, the trajectories of black Ohioans' lives are impacted by institutional racism. Ohio has been put on the map by these expressions of racism through the killings of Tamir Rice, John Crawford III, Henry Green, Tyre King, and others whose lives have been cut short through the acceptance of racism as “business as usual.”

It is time for Ohio to stand up for its black residents and address the, “Shorter life spans, greater homicide rates, higher infant mortality and greater prevalence of chronic disease...that are rooted in unequal access to housing, employment, education and public safety, combined with greater risk from pollutant exposure and the criminal justice system.”⁴

Throughout our tenure as law students, we learn about how the laws and policies set forth by the government impact individuals within their communities in terms of their opportunities, safety, and health. What legislators do has a profound impact on individuals' lives. We support this legislation and future legislation addressing racism in Ohio.

Thank you, members of the committee and sponsors Senators Sandra Williams and Hearcel Craig, for allowing us to be heard on this matter

Respectfully Submitted,

Law Student Members of the If/When/How: Lawyering for Reproductive Justice chapter at The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5844417/>

² <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20190411/ohio-lawmakers-create-caucus-to-focus-on-black-maternal-health>

³ <https://www.toledoblade.com/local/Coronavirus/2020/04/06/what-ohio-s-covid-19-coronavirus-breakdown-by-race/stories/20200406112>

⁴ <https://www.bizjournals.com/columbus/news/2020/06/02/columbus-city-council-declares-racism-a-public-hea.html>