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Testimony of

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Founder, Protect Not Serve

Supporting SCR 14

June 9, 2020

Good afternoon Senator Burke, Senator Huffman, and Senator Antonio, thank you for giving me the opportunity to present proponent testimony in support of SCR 14, introduced by Senator Williams and Senator Craig.

I am Destiny Brown, a Columbus born African American mother of four, wife, birth doula, homeschooler, community organizer and ex-Franklin County case manager for SNAP/EBT, Medicaid, TANF/CASH. I am the owner of A Mother's Love Homeschools, Doulas and Daycares. Since 2012, A Mother's Love has served as a community homeschool and home daycare space for children newborn to 5th grade. I am also the founder of Protect Not Serve, an organization dedicated to equal justice under the law.

In 2019, I resigned as case manager with FCDJS due to a number of contributing factors. I have served as a community health worker with The Celebrate One Infant Mortality Initiative, worked in over 4 different WIC locations in smoking cessation for pregnant women. I have worked in recruiting women for Medicaid's CareHome program through CareSource and have been a CareHome mom client.

To describe racism is a timeless tale of history - past and present.

It is being the only young black girl, working in the WIC clinic and hearing the back office murmurs of white clinicians about how they didn't need to call an ambulance for the 9 month pregnant Somalian woman who would probably just "squat in the parking lot the way they do."

It is being married to a straight A, full ride scholarship recipient and upstanding mentor and community member who still wasn't good enough to escape the trap of being brutalized by police, slapped with a falsified charge and stamped as a criminal to desired employers.

It is sitting in the back office of infant mortality driven organizations and not being heard, as a pregnant black woman living in these realities.

It is humiliation and degradation delivered at the hands of governmental social service professionals.

To be honest, my experiences with the systematic racism in this county have been horrendous, and yet I have been lucky... Blessed, to have all my children and my husband.

As an alumni of a historically black college, Bethune Cookman University, I was in Florida when my husband and I became pregnant with our first child. In Florida, Medicaid allows women to choose to have a hospital birth or a homebirth with a midwife or doula that is covered under their Medicaid insurance. To my surprise, when relocating to Columbus, I no longer had the option to choose a midwife under my Medicaid coverage. My only option was to pay a prohibitively expensive out of pocket amount for a private midwife. My two oldest children were born in Florida with a midwife in my home, and they weighed 9 pounds and 9 pounds and 14 ounces respectively. My two youngest children were born with care at a hospital here in Columbus. My third child weighed 7 pounds, 12 ounces, and my youngest was 8 pounds, 13 ounces. The difference in my care shows in the birth weight of my babies.

I was a case worker at Franklin county Job and Family Services and had to quit after extensive childcare issues because I was deemed "over income" for childcare benefits as a result of my employment *with them*. I worked on the hotline, serving over 400,000 people in this county like me whose stories of infant mortality, incarceration, resulting mental health disorders and countless devastating scenarios...many of which could have been eased by our county office. My frustration runs deep. Not only was I working there, I was living it.

I left the FCJFS in the Fall of 2019 to homeschool and take care of my kids and my community. I was disgusted by what I learned working in the systems, I worked for Columbus public health WIC, Celebrate Ones infant mortality initiative...all while black and pregnant. Talk about an eye opener. 70% of the babies that die in this County are to mothers who are Medicaid recipients. It is time to point fingers to the right places.

Systemic racism is rooted in policies and strategies that discriminate and oppress.

Racism is redlining policies in housing that now outline the very areas where infant mortality, crime, unemployment, death and poor life outcomes are nurtured and perpetuated.

To address the deep-rooted plague of racism we must first recognize the ripple effect that it has had many communities of color around our nation and in our own state. Black women and babies are dying at rates as heartbreaking as the rate that black men are dying at the hand of police. Who will remain among us if you kill us all through your policies, policing, incarceration, and oppression to opportunity?

We are asking that our leaders, politicians, councilmember, every voice and human being hear the call for justice around our world. We are seeking;

- Mandated prison time for officers involved in the killing of unarmed civilians
- Additional prison time for the following offenses:
 - Unarmed restrained civilian
 - Civilian on their own property, car, business
 - Mistaken identity
 - Violent force to nonviolent civilians leading to civilian death

- Police offender registry for officers with repeat offenses
- Black community investment - Radical reform
 - Black education
 - Black fetal maternal health
 - Black businesses
 - Black opportunities and employment
 - Medicaid coverage for doulas and midwives
- Financial accountability/community investment from corner stores in black neighborhoods

Black communities around our nation are in a state of crisis as a result of the systematic policies of oppression that have riddled the hopes and dreams of our communities. We are asking our Governor to take a clear stand by setting an example for clear, measurable actions, partnerships, funding and continued conversation to dismantle the systems of racism that have gone unmentioned, unaddressed for far too long.