

“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 Julie Collins and I’m sending my testimony in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14) declaring that racism is a public health crisis.

I am a 55 year old black woman born and raised here in central Ohio. I have lived here 53 of my 55 years. And I have felt racism at different times in every aspect of my life. I can tell you that while I have been able to achieve some success, I am an exception and not the norm.

Recently, we have seen where race is a factor in our lives. People want to argue that it is a social construct but that construct can mean life or death. As we saw in Louisiana during hurricane Katrina, COVID-19 has wreaked havoc in the black communities of Ohio. We have high percentages of infection, hospitalizations and death. To say that this is because we are overweight and have high blood pressure is terrible analysis and I would submit racist in its presentation.

Black people in Ohio are still affected by the same racism that our ancestors faced. The redlining that occurred to keep us out of certain areas still cordon off those areas today. Toxic industries are located in our community. Freeways have cut off access and have destroyed neighborhoods.

The public school system in Ohio is awful. 70% of black children are educated in the big eight school districts and none of the are giving our children the proper education.

These two items impact your future, will you go to college and get a degree? Will you then be able to get a job with a living wage or better?

Then that feeds into what kind of healthcare do you have access to getting? How will you be treated once you arrive at the hospital? Will your illness even be taken seriously? Recently, I had to have a hearth cath. The IV that I was given was inserted wrong, so I never got the anesthesia that I was supposed to get. I was wide awake for the entire procedure. I kept telling them something was wrong, and they did not listen. As I was getting dressed after the procedure the nurse could see the meds that they attempted to give me in the tissues surrounding the IV.

I strongly believe that the reason COVID-19 hit the community so hard is because of systemic racism.

My mother is dead, she dies at the age of 38 after having a baby. I don’t believe she should have died. I feel her health was not taken seriously and in waiting it cost us her life.

If there were any other disease killing people at the steady rate that racism does, there would be no need for my testimony because you would already be doing something to stop it.

The success of a person in life, whether they live or die, should not be determined by skin color. But in Ohio it is, and we need to fix that quickly.

Thank you to the committee and Thank you to Sen. Williams and Sen. Craig who sponsored this resolution I can be reached at jeichorn0531@gmail.com or 740-739-8090 if you have questions on my testimony.