

Thank you, Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee. I'm writing to testify in support of the Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14) declaring that racism is a public health crisis. My name is Kylene Daily, and I am currently a 5th year trainee in the Medical Scientist Training Program at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. This program is uniquely positioned to train dual degree MD/PhDs who are leaders in both science, medicine and research.

Many of my colleagues will have noted specific ways that systemic racism impacts the health of our individual patients. I would like to also call attention to how systemic racism will have long-lasting consequences on medical and public health research. Overwhelmingly, Black and other minority groups are underrepresented in academic research positions and medical leadership. The barriers and obstacles founded in racism that are faced by these communities will result in the following consequences:

First, it will continue that research trainees who are minorities will not receive the most effective and appropriate support. These students must be able to reach out to support systems who can relate to them. At our institution, minority students rely heavily on a small group of mentors because there are simply not enough options. Overall, this may result in minority trainees not reaching their full potential or having to endure more unfair barriers and more challenges.

Second, if we do not increase the numbers of researchers who are minorities, the questions and hypotheses the scientific community creates will continue to be limited in scope and in some cases, will continue to be problematic. For example, our genetic code is being used to discover new treatments for a variety of diseases including cancer and Alzheimer's disease. Many of the greatest medical advancements in our time will likely come from this approach. The way this works is that clinical samples are collected from willing donors. When allowed by regulatory procedures and with written consent of the patient or family, researchers may use these samples to explore the DNA of the samples. For decades, the scientific community has failed to recognize that ethnicity and race must be appropriately included in these studies. Often, studies are limited to Caucasian patients. It is then impossible to be certain if a treatment will work for all our patients. This is not just true of studies looking at DNA, but also of studies on our immune system, our response to vaccines, our response to various medications, and so many others.

This may seem like an easy problem to fix by simply asking the question "How does race play a role?" but it is not this simple. Recruiting minority patients to be included in research studies such as this and other public health endeavors is not always straightforward because of a general distrust of the scientific community. We need leaders in these realms who can relate to these patients to help them understand the importance, safety and risks of these studies. In addition to improving patient-researcher trust, the questions we ask are still in dire need of advancement. In the past, scientists have severely missed the mark in asking appropriate questions and reporting their data. In many cases, scientists have explicitly manipulated or inadvertently misrepresented their data to continue to promote racist ideologies. The presence of minority researchers in these fields will help their colleagues overcome implicit biases and they will ask new and better questions regarding the relationship between race and health.

In conclusion, racism is a public health crisis because it is severely limiting our ability to discover new medical treatments that work for all our patients. We must support minority students to pursue their passion in medical and health fields. A critical step forward in addressing racism as a public health crisis is to help all researchers recognize the importance of race in medical

research and to expand representation in these fields. Our world deserves to see a diverse group of researchers effectively accomplish the goal of advancing health for all, together. This resolution could enable researchers in Ohio to lead the way.

I would like to thank the committee for their time spent moving forward on this critical issue. I would also like to thank Sen. Sandra Williams and Sen. Hearcel Craig for sponsoring this resolution. Thank you.