

Thank you Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee. I would like to testify in support of the Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14) declaring that racism is a public health crisis.

My name is Danielle Robinson and I am a second-year medical student at The Ohio State University College of Medicine. Disparities resulting from systemic racism and racial biases affect nearly every aspect of our patients' lives. This has been clearly illustrated to me throughout my medical education so far. It is no surprise that our four years of medical school are filled with learning about numerous diseases and conditions, however, it has been so eye-opening to see how many diseases list being Black, or part of another minority, as a "risk factor". This is an oversimplification, however. Often times, health disparities are connected to issues resulting from systematic racism and therefore ultimately disproportionately impact the Black Community. This is well documented by our Government already. In 1989, the Ohio Commission on Minority Health was established in order to address the issues of health disparities and health inequities in Ohio.<sup>1</sup> In an article published May 14, 2020 in the Columbus Dispatch, Commissioner Marilyn Brown added: "The disparities have shown themselves in a much bigger way through this pandemic in every way possible. We knew they were there, but clearly, through the pandemic, we've seen disparities in every way possible."<sup>2</sup> We have the data, we know this is an issue, but now is the time we need to do more.

My first introduction to the fact that racism is a public health crisis was during my undergraduate career majoring in Nutrition. We talked in depth about the prevalence of *preventable* health issues resulting from limited access to healthcare, clean water, healthy foods, quality education, etc., and how these factors are linked to lower socioeconomic groups. In our current society this ultimately means that minorities are the ones most likely to be impacted by these issues. As I got into my medical school education, I learned that these issues run so much deeper. Implicit biases are embedded in our health care system, and this is something that many health care providers are becoming aware of. Despite us being aware of these issues, Black patients are still more likely to receive worse care, an example being in receiving pain medications when necessary; have longer waiting times, even in the case of getting an EKG as a Black patient presenting with signs of a heart attack; and according to the CDC, live on average about 3 years less than White individuals<sup>3</sup>.

Racism is a public health issue. We as a society have ignored this problem long enough and it is well past time to address this problem. It is time. I ask you to vote in support of SCR14, so we can work toward treating racism in our society and start bettering the lives of our own community members. As a future physician, I have to speak out on this issue that negatively impacts my future patients. I hope that as someone who has the privilege to make progress on this issue that negatively impacts your society, you also feel the need to support the Senate Concurrent Resolution 14.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the committee and the sponsors of this resolution, Sen. Sandra Williams and Sen. Hearcel Craig. I am open for questions if you have any.

Sincerely,  
Danielle Robinson

- 1.) <https://mih.ohio.gov/Medical-Expert-Panel>
- 2.) <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20200514/franklin-county-lsquotracism-is-public-health-crisisrsquo>
- 3.) <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/abus/2017/015.pdf>