

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 Teresa Kuhns, and I'm here to testify in support of the Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14) declaring that racism is a public health crisis.

As a medical student at The Ohio State University, I have the great privilege of learning in an academic environment that values diversity in education and in exposing students to the realities of racial injustice, specifically in healthcare access, utilization, and burden of disease. I trust your goals align with mine in eliminating discrimination and promoting health and well-being for all citizens, including Black Ohioans.

It is not a new discovery that black Americans are disproportionately impacted by negative health outcomes. This is especially prevalent in Ohio regarding adverse pregnancy outcomes. According to the City of Columbus website, black babies are 2.5 times more likely to die than white babies in Franklin County. It has been shown time after time that black women are at a greater risk of adverse pregnancy outcomes, including infant mortality, preterm birth, hypertensive disease of pregnancy, and small-for-gestational-age (SGA) birth than their white counterparts.

The lives of black babies matter.

The disparities surrounding pregnancy do not just affect infants. From 2008-2016, Ohio had 620 pregnancy-associated deaths. It has been reported that black mothers in Ohio are 2.5 times more likely than white mothers to die from pregnancy-related complications.

The lives of black mothers matter.

Declaring racism a public health crisis is more than a political move. It extends beyond even moral obligation. There is a chance to save lives. Declaring racism a public health crisis will provide resources needed to more significantly impact a vulnerable population and change the current narrative.

In closing I'd like to thank the committee for their time and for being brave enough to move forward on this critical issue. I would also like to thank Sen. Sandra Williams and Sen. Hearcel Craig for sponsoring this resolution. Thank you.

Teresa Kuhns

MD Candidate 2023