



June 8, 2020

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee:

Our community has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country. In Franklin County, too many babies do not reach their first birthdays. CelebrateOne is the collective community impact initiative created to address Columbus and Franklin County's unacceptably high infant mortality rate. Our focus is on providing resources to support mothers and infants to ensure every child born in our community has the opportunity to thrive. We are committed to the mothers and infants in our community. The coalition that is CelebrateOne, comprised of Columbus Public Health, the Central Ohio Hospital Council, and over 100 faith and community-based organizations is focused on reducing the infant mortality rate by 40% and cutting the racial disparity rate in half by the end of 2020.

I am writing to share the considerable impact declaring racism as a public health crisis has on our moms and families in Columbus and Franklin County. Like you, CelebrateOne is committed to improving the lives of people in our community. Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 helps underscore how important addressing racial inequities is to the families we serve.

Ohio has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the nation. In 2018, Ohio's infant mortality rate was 6.9 per 1,000 live births. Additionally, the black infant mortality rate was 13.9. The racial disparity rate for infant mortality in Columbus and Franklin County is 2.6. Black infants are dying at a rate 2.5 to 3 times higher than white infants. Racism and inequities in the social, economic and physical environment drive the increased risk of infant mortality for African Americans. Institutional racism and racial inequities with the social determinants of health such as housing, education, employment and transportation have long-term consequences for the health of African American women and their children. For example, the experience of systematic racial bias, high rates of housing instability and eviction, and the racial and gender pay gap in the workforce among African American women lead to an increased likelihood of chronic stress, a driving factor of prematurity which is a leading cause of infant mortality. Decreasing the racial inequities for women and families in our community will improve birth outcomes.

We are asking you to stand with the residents of central Ohio and join the City of Columbus and Franklin County in declaring racism a public health crisis.

Thank you for your consideration,

Dawn Tyler Lee, Interim Director
CelebrateOne

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Celebrate One Partners

Columbus Public Health Central Ohio Hospital Council Columbus Department of Development Franklin County Board of Commissioners
Franklin County Families and Children First Council Ohio Department of Medicaid Columbus City Council Franklin County Department of
Job and Family Services Ohio Better Birth Outcomes Collaborative Partners for Kids