

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 Abena Minta, I am a 2nd year medical student from Columbus, OH and I am here to testify in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14) declaring that racism is a public health crisis. In order to better support the necessity of this declaration, I would like to share a personal story:

Bernard Marfo Atta. He was a Christian, a proud Black father, and a nurse. He was my uncle. And now, he's dead. On May 19th, 2020 my uncle lost his battle to COVID-19 after only 9 days. He contracted COVID while working as a nurse at Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction's (ODRC) facility in Orient, OH. It is a fact that COVID-19 disproportionality affects black and brown people, particularly those in the prison system. Yet at one point, resources at the ODRC facility were so scarce, the nurses had to resort to reusing personal protective equipment (PPE).

My uncle was a quiet man with a kind mind. The kind of person whose presence alone was enough to bring you comfort and peace. He was loved by his family, his patients, and his coworkers. Since his death, I have struggled to find the words, verbally, or written, to bring peace to my cousins and to myself. In writing this testimony, I hope to assist in catalyzing change that is so desperately needed in our Country. Racism is a public health crisis, and the denial of this fact prevents us, as future physicians, from having the lens and the perspective needed to treat patient's equitability and holistically. Racism is a public health crisis, and the denial of this fact, as law makers and legislators, is allowing the injustices that enable some patients to be offered screening, hospitalization and supportive treatment while other patients are sent home to quarantine and die to continue.

After my uncle died, I felt helpless. I still, feel helpless. My initial reaction was to confide in no one outside of my immediate family, for if I ignored the pain, then eventually, the heaviness in my heart would go away. But when I think of **Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd**, and the countless other black and brown people who have lost their lives because it is easier for our country to ignore systemic racism than to instill legislation to bring forth change, I knew I could not be silent.

I am writing today to share my experience. An experience that is unfortunately not unique in the black community. It is a fact that black women are more likely to die from childbirth. It is a fact that black patients are less likely to receive pain medication and supportive care when compared to white patients. It is a fact that I will live the rest of my life without my uncle. It is a fact that too often black and brown children are dealt emotional and mental trauma at the hands of police brutality and forced to grow up without a mom or dad.

Racism is a public health crisis. I am here today to share my experiences in hopes that you will acknowledge this fact. In hopes that we can work together to reform our current policy and bring forth change.

I would like to end by thanking the committee and sponsors of the resolution, Senator Sandra Williams and Senator Hearcel Craig. I am open for any questions.

Thank you all for your time and consideration.