

SCR 14: RACISM A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS PROPONENT TESTIMONY 6-9-20

Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, I'm here to strongly support SCR 14. I want to thank Senators Craig and Williams for bringing this forward, and Chairman Burke for scheduling a hearing so promptly.

When I started to think about what I wanted to say in support, my first thought was that all I need to say is, "Duh!" Of course the nine organizations cited are correct that the economic, social, emotional, and physical harm racism does to its direct victims is a public health crisis. By "direct victims," I mean those who are targeted by negative racial attitudes and behaviors. But, less directly, we are all victims. Racism is a crisis for all of us. It is a dark stain on all of us.

Beyond "duh," I want to express my support of the five specific actions this resolution proposes:

- 1) Making an official, formal declaration of the problem.
- 2) Establishing a working group to promote racial equality.
- 3) Reviewing the entire Ohio Revised Code for inequity sections or language.
- 4) Conducting General Assembly business equitably.
- 5) Reviewing internal policies and practices for inequities.

I understand that a resolution, when passed, won't have the same force as a bill passed into a law. I hope that whatever steps need to be taken next to ensure these recommendations are implemented will be taken.

In particular, I'd feel safer if a written and adopted statement were made somewhere in the process providing actions two, three, and five with specific follow-up expectations.

For the reviews: who will receive the findings and what will they be expected and authorized to do about the findings?

For the working group to be effective, follow-up steps should be established. Years ago I followed a study group that was examining required public notice of government business in light of the newer technology for communication. The draft report had typos and even grammar and spelling errors—including the misspelling of one member's name! The final report was word-for-word, error-for-error exactly the same as the draft. We have to wonder if anyone, including the members and especially the member whose own name was misspelled, even read the report. I was a local government public records administrator at the time so I was in a position to know if any recommendations resulted in changes to the notice sections of ORC: none were at that time.

Two years ago, the Ohio Depts. of Transportation and of Public Safety created a task force on distracted driving and I was honored to be a member. That task force's recommendations were visibly promoted by the governor, written up into a bill, and proposed as SB 285, which Sen. Kunze has jointly sponsored. A working group can have an effect **IF** expectations for follow-through are built in.

The serious and widespread damage that racial inequities cause are far too important for a working group's efforts to get lost in the shuffle.

I sincerely hope you will quickly, easily, and unanimously pass this resolution, ***and*** commit yourselves personally and individually to ensuring that all needed follow-up actions are taken.

Thank you for your attention to this resolution and to my thoughts on it.

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