



Senate Health and Human Service Committee
Proponent Testimony SCR 14, Racism as a Public Health Issue
Darold Johnson, Co-Chair of the Ohio Consumers for Health Care
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Chair Burke, Vice-Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, I am Darold Johnson, Co-Chair of the Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage. Ohio Consumers for Health Coverage (OCHC) is a coalition uniting the consumer voice to achieve affordable, high-quality care for all. OCHC combines the forces of over 20 health care consumer organizations to bring consumer views to legislators, administrators, and other stakeholders in the health care system.

We support Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 because it addresses the concerns that we have had as a coalition for many years and that is providing healthcare to the underserved communities in Ohio. We support the passage of this resolution because we have seen firsthand from consumers across the state how the lack of healthcare and of economic opportunity, as well as food insecurity and violence negatively affect black and brown communities in Ohio.

On June 5, 2020, Governor DeWine said, "We should all be outraged that in the year 2020, in Ohio and this country, there's still inequality of opportunity and there is still racism." "The coronavirus, this global pandemic, has laid bare our vulnerabilities." Recent polling says 80 percent of the public supports the protectors.

Senate Resolution 14 echoes the voices of thousands of Ohioans of all races across the state and around the world. It also reflects the data that has been gained by public health organizations nationally and in Ohio.

Health Policy Institute of Ohio says, "The data and research evidence are clear that racism is a systemic and ongoing public health crisis with serious consequences for the health of Ohioans. It is also clear that racism is a crisis with profound and pervasive impacts across all the factors that shape our health. This includes our healthcare, education, housing, food, economic, criminal justice and political systems among others."

We raise the names of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tamir Rice and Eric Gardner as witnesses of the systematic racism that has killed hundreds of black men and recently black women. These are but a few blacks killed by police. To suggest that the problem is limited to a few rogue police officers indicates a blindness to the systematic dehumanization of blacks by countless systems, not the least of which is the system of law enforcement. It also doesn't recognize the findings of the 1967 Kerner Commission.

In 1968, the Kerner Commission issued a report on civil unrest in America. The report identified more than 150 **riots** or major disorders between 1965 and 1968 (including the deadly Newark and Detroit **riots**) and **blamed** "white racism" for sparking the violence—not a conspiracy by black political groups as some claimed.

The country is ripe for change and those ignoring it will only foster more protest. Failing to hear these multi-racial voices will only result in more violence and rioting because, as Dr. King said, "riots are the voices of the unheard."

After 400 years of systematic abuse and discrimination of Blacks in this country, there is little doubt that racism has been and continues to be an issue. Six years after Eric Gardner said I can't breathe in New York, George Floyd uttered the same last words on a corner in Minneapolis. We must work for social change.

SCR 14 speaks for itself. The data is clear. We urge you to pass this resolution but, more importantly, we urge you to use the breath that you have to begin the work to change the system they have left black and brown people behind.