

Re: S.C.R. No. 14 – Concurrent Resolution to declare racism a public health crisis and to ask the Governor to establish a working group to promote racial equity in Ohio.

The Racial Equity Institute (REI) of Greensboro, NC is a racial equity training organization that has promoted health equity work and trained healthcare providers around the United States since its inception in 2012. We would like to lend our support to S.C.R. No. 14.

There is no question that we are living in historic times, and the confluence of events of the recent months allows our society a golden opportunity to address a long festering problem that pervades every aspect of our lives - the racial inequity which has been established, nurtured, and yet mostly ignored during our 400 years of development as a country. What we are seeing today is the insidious nature of racial inequity occurring in all of our systems but playing out in our health care system as people of color in this country are being disproportionately affected by Covid-19 both in number of cases and in number of deaths.

This resolution provides an excellent overview of the ways all of our systems are interrelated in contributing to racial health inequity. A careful examination of the history of medical care in this country reveals that racial inequity has been in the fabric of our medical care system since its inception, just as there is racial disproportionality in every one of our systems (employment, government, environment, housing, food distribution, law enforcement, etc.).

<https://racialequityinstitute.com/download-pdf>

Our health is dependent on many social determinants, and each of our systems need to be examined to evaluate how that is occurring. Our data tells us that we have race-based outcomes in each of our systems, but we have unsuccessfully attempted to solve those problems with race-neutral solutions despite our best efforts. (for example in philanthropy: <https://hbr.org/2020/06/the-problem-with-color-blind-philanthropy> )

When we compare our health outcomes to other countries, we find that we fare poorly. For example, in 2017 data from the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) the US ranked at the bottom of multiple parameters (e.g. 30 out of 37 in life expectancy and 35 out of 37 in infant mortality rate). When our systems underperform for people of color in this country, they also underperform for all of us.

We have a golden opportunity in 2020, to begin the challenging, difficult, and heart wrenching work of examining each of our systems to uncover the ways they are actually contributing to these racial inequities. Ohio can stand as a leader in moving forward with this resolution to address racial inequity at the deepest levels. Ohio can model this examination of systems and lead the United States in moving toward true racial equity.