



Senate Concurrent Resolution 14
Declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis

Steven Wagner, Executive Director
Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio

swagner@uhcanohio.org

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Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony from the Universal Health Care Action Network of Ohio (UHCAN Ohio). UHCAN Ohio is a statewide nonprofit organization uniting consumers and their allies to assure everyone has access to quality, affordable health care. We are a member of Advocates for Ohio's Future, the umbrella health and human services coalition for the state of Ohio.

UHCAN Ohio supports Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 because racism is an abhorrent reality that continues to impact everyone in Ohio; it is time to address the cause and consequences of racism systematically across all of Ohio. Racism directly affects the over 2 million black and brown people in Ohio, physically, mentally, economically and socially, every day. Those not subjected to racism are negatively impacted by the loss of so many people's ability to contribute to our economy, schools and society to their fullest potential. Racism diminishes all our lives.

A public health approach to addressing racism is important because it seeks to create maximum health for everyone. The public health approach seeks to:

1. Define the problem through systematic collection of data;
2. Determine causality and correlations for the problem;
3. Design and test interventions based on data and research; and,
4. Implement effective and promising interventions in a wide range of settings and evaluate their effectiveness.

This approach should be familiar from our experience over the last three months with COVID-19. Good decisions and good policy are driven by data. Yet decisions are frequently made without information on how policy will differentially impact people of color. For example, we should have robust, weekly reports from the administration and data should be disaggregated by race and ethnicity on enrollment, disenrollment, determinations, and denial for Medicaid, Unemployment Insurance, TANF, SNAP, and OWF. From national data we know that people of color have been disproportionately impacted by the unemployment resulting from COVID-19. We should be looking at this data in Ohio and determining which people and communities need support and what kinds of support would be most effective. It is likely that we should be launching locally informed public education and awareness campaigns across the state to reach communities of color so they know how to access benefits (Medicaid, Unemployment, SBA loans, etc.) to keep their families healthy and safe.

Ohio has the resources, knowledge and innovation to end racism, but it starts from assuring we have good data and information. That is not simply the data on programs but includes



understanding as to how red-lining and other “legal” policy practices still play out in our law and policy. It also means that all decision makers who are privileged should come to an understanding of their privilege, the role of implicit bias and the systems the reinforce racism.

Eliminating racism will not happen without courage and resolve. Openly recognizing the crisis is the start. We have delayed addressing these issues for too long. We must find meaningful strategies and solutions now.

Thank you.