

Chairman Burke, Vice Chairman Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony. My name is Ashlee, and I'm a 4th-year medical student at The Ohio State University pursuing Obstetrics and Gynecology. The following are my own personal views and opinions, and do not reflect those of my institution. I would like to express my utmost support for Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14), declaring that racism is a public health crisis in the state of Ohio.

Before I was a medical student, I studied Public Health at Ohio State. One of my Public Health professors at the time was Dr. Amy Acton, our current Department of Health director. Something she said that has always stuck with me is: "your zip code determines your health," meaning that one's socioeconomic background has a significant impact on their health and wellbeing. As I have progressed through my medical career, I have seen first-hand the truth of this statement. There are countless lectures in medical school that demonstrate the adverse health outcomes disproportionately affecting Black patients, and learning about racial healthcare disparities is an integral, central part of medical school curriculum. If the next generation of physicians are being educated on that fact that racism is a public health crisis, then this should absolutely be addressed at a policy level.

While preparing to enter my chosen field of Obstetrics and Gynecology, I believe it is my duty to advocate for the women who will be my future patients. The statistics for expectant Black mothers are deeply unsettling, and there is truly a crisis of Black maternal mortality. In the state of Ohio, Black women die from complications related to childbirth at three times the rate of White women¹. Between the years of 2008 and 2016, Black women accounted for only 17% of women giving birth, but accounted for 34% of pregnancy-related deaths in Ohio². This is just one field of healthcare; there are so many other specialties that reflect similar statistics for Black patients. We have the data, and we have the innovative medical centers to provide quality care - but there is a paucity of policy support. The lives of my future patients simply cannot be up for debate, and resolutions like SCR 14 are needed to promote long-term change that will save lives.

Thank you, members of the committee and sponsors Senator Sandra Williams and Senator Hearcel Craig, for allowing my testimony to be heard on this matter.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashlee Weaver

1. <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20190411/ohio-lawmakers-create-caucus-to-focus-on-black-maternal-health>
2. <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20191115/over-4-year-period-57-of-pregnancy-deaths-in-ohio-could-have-been-prevented-report-says?fbclid=IwAR1phVNcyBTdbhVCrVhpmiJp4Q1wuX21k5lUzeFf6fMSVjaCwQvaVGCyprg>