

Testimony in Support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14
Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
COLUMBUS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
June 23, 2020

Founded in 1884, the Columbus Chamber (“Chamber”) is the leading voice of business within the 11-county Columbus Region (Franklin, Delaware, Union, Fairfield, Licking, Knox, Logan, Madison, Morrow, Marion, Pickaway), representing more than 2,000 members employing over 500,000 workers across all industry sectors. While most of our large corporate anchors are investors in our Chamber, more than 80 percent of our members have less than 100 employees, and it is through the lens of the small business owner that we not only review and advocate on policymaking, but also plan and carry out the entirety of our work.

The Columbus region business community stands firmly in support of S.C.R. 14 to declare racism a public health crisis and to ask the Governor to establish a working group to promote racial equity in Ohio. We must formally recognize that black lives matter, and prioritize public policies to eliminate systemic racism.

We recognize that institutional racism has led to disparities and inequalities throughout our community, our state, and our country. These disparities not only impact the current and future workforce, but also the overall wellbeing and future prosperity of our state and its residents. Like our elected leaders, business leaders want to ensure that the people of Ohio, especially the black community and those directly impacted by racial injustice, feel heard and that there is hope for change. Employers are committed to creating change within their organizations through diversity and inclusion initiatives, volunteerism, foundational giving, and more. And as the Ohio Legislature considers S.C.R. 14, please know that you have a partner in the Columbus Chamber and our members in bringing about systemic change across our region.

The Columbus Chamber has long been a champion for workplace diversity and inclusion. Research unequivocally shows the benefits to both business and society of increased diversity in the workplace, on boards and in leadership positions, and in entrepreneurship. The mission of the Columbus Chamber Foundation is to improve the economic wellbeing of underserved individuals through enhanced access to workforce development and employment opportunities. We have successfully worked to better integrate into the workforce the City’s immigrant population, improve access to jobs for formerly incarcerated individuals, and highlight the benefits of hiring people with varying disabilities. Education, employment and training are proven means to achieving upward social mobility and creating a more level playing field for minority populations, therefore making our Chamber and Foundation incredibly important partners in this endeavor.

The Chamber is actively working to identify public policy solutions to effectively address the economic needs of the region’s minority population, and help them overcome racial barriers to employment, entrepreneurship and social mobility. We will look forward to working with you to actualize some of those recommendations.

We respectfully request your support of S.C.R. 14. Thank the resolution sponsors, including Franklin County's Senator Hearcel Craig, for reemphasizing the need for greater action both in the public and private sectors to achieve racial justice and equality. The Columbus Chamber stands ready to work with you.