

# YWCA IS ON A MISSION

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YWCA Dayton  
Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee  
S.C.R. 14– Proponent Testimony  
June 9, 2020

Chair Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Concurrent Resolution (SCR) 14, which would declare racism a public health crisis in the state of Ohio.

My name is Shannon Isom, President and CEO of YWCA Dayton and President of the Ohio Council of YWCAs, representing the 14 Ohio YWCA associations. YWCA is driven by a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all, and serves the largest constituency of women across the state. YWCA has been at the forefront of the most pressing social movements for more than 160 years — from voting rights to civil rights, from affordable housing to pay equity, from violence prevention to health care reform. Today, we combine programming and advocacy to generate institutional change in three areas: racial justice and civil rights, empowerment and economic advancement of women and girls, and health and safety of women and girls.

Hundreds of years of slavery, racism, and discrimination in this country have compounded to deliver poor health and economic outcomes for black people — heart disease, diabetes, and poverty— that are being magnified under the lens of the current coronavirus pandemic. This legacy of racism has also led communities of color to have less trust in institutions like the public health system, leading to even poorer health outcomes. In Ohio, the highest excess death rates exist for African Americans and Native Americans at every stage in the life course and our infant mortality rate for infants of non-Hispanic black women is the eighth highest in the nation.

It is well-known in the public health field that social determinants of health have an outsized influence on health outcomes. Because our nation’s legacy of discrimination and preserved structural racism perpetuates racial disparities, actions must be targeted to address the specific needs of communities of color as we fight for better health outcomes. For YWCA Dayton, an organization dedicated to thrust our collective power towards the elimination of racism, wherever it exists, by any means necessary, we believe that declaring racism as a public health crisis is the long-term policy response that can outlast this particular moment, redress the wrongs of the past, and shepherd us into a healthier, more equitable future.

In alignment with our mission, YWCA Dayton thus requests that you support the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 to declare racism as a public health crisis in Ohio to accept responsibility for the government’s role in creating oppressive systems that marginalize black and brown Americans, and proactively work to create a more equitable community for all our residents. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



**eliminating racism  
empowering women**  
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