



Office of the President
University of Cincinnati
PO Box 210063
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0063

625 University Pavilion
Phone: (513) 556-2201
Email: president@uc.edu

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Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SCR 14.

The University of Cincinnati is leading public urban universities into a new era of innovation, inclusion and impact. Our faculty, staff, and students are saving lives, changing outcomes and shaping the direction of our city, region and state. We serve over 46,000 students across 14 colleges and 414 areas of discipline. Four of these colleges comprise what's known today as the UC Academic Health Center (AHC). These dynamic centers of education and research serve as the foundation for training exceptional patient care providers across a range of health fields. One goal of the AHC is to increase the diversity of the health care workforce that can lead to improved outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse patient populations.

As an urban serving university, we have a responsibility to train and prepare students, faculty and staff to recognize their own biases and strive to mitigate implicit bias in order to improve the quality of care to minority populations but more needs to be done. Further, we recognize racism as one of the primary causes of the social determinants of health that drives inequity and negatively impacts health outcomes. According to state health department data, Black Ohioans were more likely to die of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and cancer compared to other racial groups. Ohio has one of the highest Black infant mortality rates in the nation and the poverty rate for Black Ohioans is more than twice the poverty rate for White Ohioans.

When the University of Cincinnati launched its strategic direction, *Next Lives Here* in 2018, we did so with the vision of leading higher education into a new era—one built on the interdisciplinary pillars of innovation, inclusion and impact. If 2020 has proven anything to the world, it is the distinct reality that this new era of disruptive change is upon us. Now is the time to lead differently. Now is the time to address the reality that whole segments of society are unable to attain health and quality healthcare at the same level as others due to systemic racism. All of us must work together, across all institutions and into our broader community, to hold ourselves and each other accountable for the lasting change we want to see.

It is with this in mind that we rise in support of SCR 14 to declare racism a public health crisis and ask the Governor to create a working group to promote racial equity in Ohio. Further, we hope this working group will establish measurable action items to address this critical issue. The University of Cincinnati is committed to this issue and prepared to offer its resources and expertise to assist our partners in eradicating inequality in our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Neville G. Pinto'.

Neville Pinto
President