

Respectfully submitted by Manju Sankarappa

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Thank you Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio and members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee. My name is Manju Sankarappa, Executive Director of Ohio Asian American Health Coalition. The Coalition has nine member organizations throughout the State of Ohio. Founded in 2005, Ohio Asian American Health Coalition is an alliance of nine community organizations throughout State of Ohio and individuals focused on the health and well-being of Ohio's Asian American & Pacific Islander populations.

Advocate for improved access to personalized, culturally and linguistically competent health care. The OAAHC represents 328,000 Asian Americans living in Ohio, including constituents of eight member organizations as well as many of individual members and supporting Organizations. Its activities are guided by common values, including the belief that all of Ohio's citizens must have access to quality health care.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE OAAHC:

- Support the health initiatives of all member organizations;
- Promote research and education to address health disparities;

I'm here to testify in support of the Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14) declaring that racism is a public health crisis. We are here to support and declare Racism as a public health crisis. Because unequal opportunities and racial inequity are deeply embedded and usually not intended, producing equitable opportunities, operations and results requires being intentional.

Over the past three months, the United States has been entrenched in its fight against the global COVID-19 pandemic. Almost 2 million cases in the United States, 36,000 in Ohio; and over 110,000 deaths nationwide. It's clear to see the incredible toll this illness has had on our country. Even more prevalent sickness that has plagued our country for centuries that we are failing to properly acknowledge, and because of this continues to affect our current collective well-being: Racism.

COVID-19, in the context of American history, is a serious acute condition. Similar to an infection, seizure, or extreme fatigue; Now, acute illnesses can have specific reasons why they develop - certain exposures, risk factors, stress, etc. - but when properly treated, they can often go away without significant complications.

Racism is a chronic condition in our nation's history. Just like diabetes, hypertension, chronic kidney disease, etc. If this issue is addressed proactively we can solve the problem. Racism is going on for a long time, and it is about time for us take care and start fixing the problems. We see it as an ongoing issue and with relaxing of some of social distancing and absence of contact the Covid 19 we can expect this crisis to grow.

Historically, these conditions disproportionately affect BIPOC population and revolve around the social determinants of health that are deeply rooted in systemic racism: housing, socioeconomic status, education, employment, access to health care, and too many more. We are experiencing the same with COVID-19 is no different. According to the CDC, 33% of hospitalized patients were black, compared to 18% in the community. People of Color make up 17% of COVID-19 deaths, 26% of all cases and 31% of hospitalizations, although they make up only about 13% of Ohioans.



Our first responders, and all essential personnel deserve our praise for their efforts in the response to COVID-19. It is our request to **Legislators and Senators** to address Racism as Public Health Crisis soon to address public welfare and health issue that has exasperated in minority population African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinx, American Indian population and Immigrant population. Thank you for giving this opportunity for giving this testimony.

So here it is - Racism is America's chronic condition that we continually fail to address, and until we do it will either 1) worsen - or 2) continue to recur in acute exacerbations that will continue to diminish our health and strength as a society.

So if we are to acknowledge the acute presence - and rightfully so - of the Coronavirus as a public health crisis, then we must also acknowledge the widespread presence of racism in our history and current society as it continues to plague and weaken us as a nation. Let us pass this resolution and dedicate our efforts to promoting racial health equity and healing our minority communities.

"I would like to thank the committee and the sponsors of this resolution, Senator Sandra Williams and Senator Hearcel Craig. I am happy to answer any questions you may have."