



Megan Testa, MD  
President, Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association

*for the consideration of the*  
Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee

Written Proponent Testimony on Senate Concurrent Resolution 14  
Declare Racism a Public Health Crisis/Promote Racial Equality

June 25, 2020

Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, members of the Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony on behalf of the Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association, representing more than one thousand physicians who specialize in psychiatry, in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14. My name is Megan Testa, M.D. and I am a physician practicing forensic psychiatry in Cleveland, Ohio. As background, I completed medical school at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. I completed residency training in psychiatry at University Hospitals of Cleveland.

As an organization of physicians united by our commitment to serving society through the practice of psychiatry, the Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association (OPPA) recognizes racism as a public health crisis and a changeable contributor to the health disparities that exist in our society. The OPPA condemns racism in all forms.

The killing of George Floyd showed us that as the coronavirus pandemic brought our lives to a halt, racism remains alive, pervasive, and viral in our society. We have witnessed police encounters with Black Americans turn deadly over and over, including the killings of Malissa Williams and Timothy Russel, two Black adults with mental illness, and 12-year-old child Tamir Rice, right here in Ohio. We are deeply affected by these events. We grieve the loss of George Floyd at the hands of our society. We are saddened by the fact that we have allowed racism to persist in such a systemic way that one of our fellow human beings was able to be publicly suffocated in a brutal and sustained display of power without intervention. We stand with those who peacefully protest racism.

We acknowledge that racism exists in all aspects of medicine. Black physicians, and other physicians of color, face challenges on the path to medicine, including during undergraduate, graduate medical training, residency, and in the practice of medicine, that white physicians do not face. The OPPA values diversity within our profession as an important means to providing care to patients of all backgrounds. We recognize the need for reform in recruitment practices in our colleges, medical schools, and residency programs. We will work to raise awareness of the unconscious bias that impacts these decisions. We also value diversity within our membership. Our goal is to support the careers of all our members. We vow to work intentionally to recruit more diversity into our organizational leadership and to fight to reform the institution of medicine so that the needs of physicians of all races and ethnicity are recognized and met.

The OPPA also commits to the greater movement for racial justice that is arising from the collective trauma that has occurred. As physicians, we took an oath to do no harm. We recognize that silence on the issue of racism is harmful and vow to raise our voices and become involved in efforts to eliminate racism. Ohio must become a place where every single person can not only live in peace without the threat of violence because of the color of their skin, but also reach their full potential and have equal access to opportunities in society.

Finally, the OPPA also recognizes that these racial injustices have the potential to impact all our patients. We encourage our members to check in with patients to better understand the mental health implications as silence on this topic can amplify the damage.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our organization's position on racism. We stand ready to be of assistance to the Ohio Legislature, Governor Mike DeWine, and members of his administration.