

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/senate-concurrent-resolution-14-proponent-testimony>

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[Skip to main content](#)

Below is our Chief Lobbyist Gary Daniels' proponent testimony on Senate Concurrent Resolution 14. This was delivered to the Senate Health, Human Services, & Medicaid Committee on June 9, 2020.

To Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health, Human Services & Medicaid Committee, thank you for this opportunity to present proponent testimony on Senate Concurrent Resolution 14.

SRC 14 by itself will not solve anything. But it is a very important step towards reducing and eventually eliminating race-based disparities across numerous health concerns and issues here in Ohio. The ACLU of Ohio hopes Ohio declaring racism a public health crisis will bring the needed, additional attention to the numerous and widespread health disparities among your constituents and the reasons for them.

Ideally, calling such public attention to these problems would not be necessary and we could just skip consideration of SCR 14. But the undeniable reality, borne out by statistics and data, is Black Americans and Black Ohioans are disproportionately affected across so many health issues - and have been for so long - it appears much more needs done to convince Ohio's decision-makers this is, indeed, a crisis situation.

To be Black in Ohio is to be subject to worse effects from infant mortality rates to overall life expectancy; from lead exposure to polluted drinking water; from poverty to unemployment; from lack of access to healthy, fresh food to underfunded education to mental health and drug addiction services. All of this and more play integral and interrelated roles in the health of Black Ohioans.

Why must Black Ohioans continually and historically suffer such numerous and negative health effects as compared to white Ohioans? The good news is this need not be Ohio's ongoing reality. But first we must recognize that this widespread inequality in so many crucial health and health-related areas is systemic in nature. When the system itself structurally favors one race over another or others, that is racism.

Calling it what it plainly is should not be controversial. It is an accurate description. This conclusion should not leave anyone in this room feeling personally attacked or maligned. These problems go much farther than any individual legislator, law, or policy.

What should make people feel uneasy is when they have the power to reduce such inequality but do not. To the extent Ohio's decision makers and elected officials ignore or do not do nearly enough to combat these problems because they do not recognize this crisis for what it is, SCR 14 provides clarity.

For all these reasons and more, the ACLU of Ohio urges your passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14.

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