

Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 – Proponent Testimony
Ohio Senate Health, Human Services, and Medicaid Committee
Mark C. Clement
CEO & President, TriHealth
June 19, 2020

Dear Chairman Burke, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Antonio, and Members of the Ohio Senate Health, Human Services and Medicaid Committee:

My name is Mark C. Clement, President and CEO of TriHealth, and I am writing to offer my full support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 14 (SCR 14), which would declare racism a public health crisis and ask Governor DeWine to establish a working group to promote racial equity in Ohio.

Never has there been a more pressing time than now to confront and address systemic racism and its devastating impact on the health and wellbeing of minorities in our state and across the nation. This year's COVID-19 pandemic statistics, along with the multiple violent acts and tragic deaths born from racism, provide disturbing evidence that simply being a person of color in our nation puts you at greater risk for illness, disease, and death – an unacceptable and preventable public health crisis that is our collective responsibility to change, and change NOW. According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), while the overall health of the American population has improved over the past few decades, not all Americans have benefitted equally from these improvements. Minority populations continue to lag behind whites in a number of areas, including quality of care, access to care, timeliness, and outcomes. Other healthcare problems that disproportionately affect minorities include provider biases, poor provider-patient communication, and health literacy issues. These factors also contribute to an overall distrust of the healthcare system among minorities, especially African-American men and women, resulting in a reluctance to get the care they need, which further intensifies the issue.

TriHealth is committed to ending long-standing structural racism that results in these health disparities, and the passing of SCR 14 would help further our work to do so. Our system is rooted in the works and teachings of the Sisters of Charity and the Bethesda Deaconesses whose mission was to care for the poor and marginalized and to strive for a more just society, and this remains our mission today. Especially during these difficult times, we look to our mission and values – particularly, *Respect for All People* and *Valuing Differences* – as we seek ways to better serve our community, *the entire community*, while pursuing true equality, justice, and improved health for all.

TriHealth fully supports SCR 14 and commends Senator Sandra Williams and Senator Hearcel Craig for their efforts to introduce this legislation that would make Ohio the first state in the nation to address racism as a public health crisis. There is no place for racism in our world – and there's certainly no place for it in healthcare. Through this legislation, we will be able to take this issue head on with the state platform necessary to initiate substantive and sustainable change that can result in better health, better care, and zero tolerance for racism in our state.

Sincerely,



Mark C. Clement
President & CEO, TriHealth