



Testimony before the Government Administration and Elections Committee

Regarding SB 256 AN ACT CONCERNING RACIAL AND ETHNIC IMPACT STATEMENTS.

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On behalf of
Health Equity Solutions, Inc.

Good afternoon Co-Chairs McLachlan, Flexer, and Fox and members of the GAE Committee.

My name is Tekisha Dwan Everette, I am submitting this testimony as the Executive Director of Health Equity Solutions. Health Equity Solutions, is a non-profit organization with a state-wide focus on promoting policies, programs, and practices that result in equitable health care access, delivery, and outcomes for all people in Connecticut. Our vision is for every Connecticut resident to obtain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

Health Equity Solutions is in support of SB 256, which would enable any member of the CT General Assembly (“CGA”) to request a racial and ethnic impact statement be prepared for any bills and amendments. Currently, CT is one of five states (CT 2009, IA 2008, MN 2006, OR 2014 and NJ 2018)^{1,2} that allows the request of racial impact statements for criminal justice related bills. This legislation would propel Connecticut as national leader in examining legislation from a racial impact lens. Racial Equity Impact Statements (“REIS”) are useful and vital tools for “evaluating how different racial and ethnic groups will likely be affected by a proposed action or decision” and are used to “minimize anticipated adverse consequences” of policies. They are critical for “preventing institutional racism and for identifying new options to remedy long-standing inequities.”³

Historically, policies have been created, whether intentionally or unintentionally, that disproportionately negatively impact minority populations in the realms of health, education,

employment, housing and criminal justice. As a result, people of color have lost opportunities to be their healthiest selves, to obtain adequate education, employment and housing, and have been relegated at disproportionate numbers into the criminal justice system. One way to improve health equity and reduce health disparities among minority populations is by conducting racial equity impact assessments/statements during decision-making processes. Conducting racial impact statements for health policies, as well as other policies, could illuminate potential adverse racial impacts and help us to ensure that policies do not exacerbate these inequities in health, housing, education, and income (to name a few).

Members of the General Assembly having the ability to request racial and ethnic impact statements for legislation, especially health legislation, can play a critical role in crafting and modifying legislation to address health disparities and health inequities, as well as addressing disparities in education, housing, employment and criminal justice. Connecticut needs to maintain our commitment to ending racial and health disparities. SB 256 is a step in the right direction.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Endnotes:

¹-Washington State, (2016). Report to the legislature: Racial and ethnic impact statements. Caseload Forecast Council: Olympia, WA. Retrieved from https://app.leg.wa.gov/ReportsToTheLegislature/Home/GetPDF?fileName=CFC%202016%20Report%20on%20Racial%20and%20Ethnic%20Impact%20Statements_f8887ebc-3004-462d-b19a-77d043faa507.pdf

²- The Sentencing Project, (2018). New Jersey enacts laws to examine racial and ethnic impact of sentencing changes. Retrieved from <https://www.sentencingproject.org/news/new-jersey-enacts-law-examine-racial-ethnic-impact-sentencing-changes/>

³- Race Forward Racial Equity Impact Assessment Tool Kit retrieved from <https://www.raceforward.org/practice/tools/racial-equity-impact-assessment-toolkit>

⁴- Center for Disease Control (2017). Reproductive Health: Pregnancy Mortality Surveillance System. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pmss.html>

⁵- CT DPH, (2012). *The Burden of Asthma in Connecticut – 2012 Surveillance Report* Retrieved from <http://www.portal.ct.gov/DPH/Health-Education-Management--Surveillance/Asthma/Asthma-Surveillance>

⁶- CT DPH, (2016). Connecticut Diabetes Statistics Report, 2016 Estimates of the burden of diabetes and its risk factors in Connecticut. Retrieved from <http://www.portal.ct.gov/DPH/Health-Information-Systems--Reporting/Hisrhome/Connecticut-Diabetes-Surveillance-System>