



THE CENTER FOR EST. 1913
COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS
RESEARCH • ANALYSIS • ACTION

HOUSE STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
Written Opponent Testimony on HB 322 and HB 327
September 21, 2021

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Kelly and Members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bills 322 and 327. The Center for Community Solutions is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank that aims to improve health, social and economic conditions through research, policy analysis and communication.

Our organization has been in existence since 1913, and since that time, we have seen many moments of triumph, transformation and advancement in our state and in our country. However, there have also been moments of struggle, grief and tragedy. Racism has defined much of our nation's history, but at different moments, our country has responded by pursuing racial equality and justice, endeavoring to create a more perfect union, through things like voting access, civil rights, or more recently the targeted investment in communities that are disproportionately affected by public health issues such as maternal and infant mortality. Our democracy has evolved as our understanding has evolved, and we attempt to create a society that is of, by and for the people. House Bills 322 and 327 will undermine this necessary work because if we cannot learn from the evolution of our nation's history, we cannot make marked progress in eliminating the disparities that continue to exist for Ohioans of color. These disparities are undeniable and can be traced back to the development of core institutions within our communities; health care, education, housing and the criminal justice system to name only a few.

In our organization, we research and analyze policy issues related to health and human services, examine the impact that public policy has on community health and, when necessary, advocate for changes. With the support of our board and organizational leadership, we often examine these policy issues through the lens of racial equity by necessity and have invested in our staff's understanding of racial justice issues through training and professional development. Simply, our society needs to recognize the profound impact, historical roots and modern function of systemic racism if we are to fulfill our nation's highest aspirations and meaningfully pursue policies that enable that promise. By way of example, here are a few findings from our recent research:

- In Ohio, Black women are **two and a half times** more likely to die of a pregnancy-related death compared to white women. Source: Doula's crucial role in maternal health: <https://www.communitysolutions.com/doula-critical-role-maternal-health/>

- Ohio Black residents in nursing homes who already suffered from racial disparities in relation to COVID-19 will experience **worse health outcomes**. Source: How various disparities impact the health of nursing home residents across Ohio: <https://www.communitysolutions.com/research/various-disparities-impact-health-nursing-home-residents-across-ohio/>
- Severe maternal morbidity among Black Ohio women is almost **two times higher** (112.2 per 10,000 deliveries) than white Ohio women (60.5 per 10,000 deliveries). Source: Latest Maternal Morbidity Report Reveals Maternal Health Crisis Worsening: <https://www.communitysolutions.com/latest-maternal-morbidity-report-reveals-maternal-health-crisis-worsening/>
- Over the past year, hate crimes toward Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have increased by **150 percent** due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Source: Hate has no place in the fight against COVID-19: <https://www.communitysolutions.com/hate-no-place-fight-covid-19/>

Throughout our research into health inequities and disparities, one thing has been consistent and clear: racism is the driver and these gaps are preventable. Medical professionals from across the spectrum perpetuate health disparities, many of which are a result of the social determinants of health, by acting on their implicit biases. The environment in which a provider originates undoubtedly impacts the professionals they become and the systems they influence. We know through our research that students and educators empowered as critical learners and scientist-scholars can create a more ethical healthcare system. Therefore, a professional, accurate and ethical education is necessary to equip Ohioans in all sectors with the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively advance health equity. Without one, health disparities will not only persist for all Ohioans but will continue to cost our state resources, time, money, and most importantly, lives.

We want to thank you again for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony as Community Solutions always values the chance to weigh in on policy that would greatly impact the health and wellbeing of Ohioans. We invite the General Assembly to join us in viewing racism as a public health crisis that it is, help identify ways to make these racial health disparities a thing of the past, and lead to a prosperous and healthy future. We would welcome the chance to share additional research that we have conducted in this space and are happy to answer any questions.

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