



March 20, 2021

Re: HB 2337, **Declaring Racism as a Public Health Emergency**

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and members Bonham, Fahey, Salinas, and Zika

I am writing to you today to ask for your support for HB 2337.

Washington County Kids is a nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring access to quality out of school time (OST) programs that equip Washington County children for success. We are concerned about children having quality lives. There are many health and quality of life disparities among children in our county and often they are the result of policies that promote racial inequities whether directly or indirectly. Lack of health care access and job and housing opportunities, barriers to transportation and bureaucratic requirements that are difficult to negotiate by persons who are untrained in the dominant culture all perpetuate inequities. We believe that having policies reviewed for racist impact will assist in increasing the quality of the lives of children as well as adults. It is also important to expand and support the collection and analysis of REAL-D data so the true impact of policies can be determined. Passing this bill not only helps to raise awareness of the potential negative impact of policies but it also offers an opportunity to examine policies that reinforce inequities and challenges us all to work toward change.

As a retired public health professional and as one of the founders of Washington County Kids, I see first-hand the effects of racist policies on the lack of progress of our BIPOC children and youth. This is a missed opportunity for the state as well as the children and their families because we all lose the full benefit of their potential abilities.

We hope you will support HB 2337 to declare racism to be a public health emergency. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Katie Riley, Ed.D.
President