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Committees:
Health & Provider Services, RMM
Insurance and Financial Institutions, RMM
Appropriations
Elections
Ethics
Family & Children Services
Joint Rules
Rules & Legislative Procedure

May 8, 2020

Dear Leaders,

During the 2020 Legislative Session, I authored a resolution asking for a study on how the state can reduce the racial disparities plaguing Indiana's health systems, including offering scholarships for people of color interested in pursuing a health care career. Indiana has consistently seen poorer health outcomes for African Americans compared to their white counterparts, and the COVID-19 pandemic is exposing this dynamic even more starkly. This is why I am asking the Legislative Council once again to assign the issue of racial disparities in Indiana's health care systems to a study committee this interim.

The outbreak of the coronavirus is exposing the continued prevalence of higher rates of public health problems and lower access to care in communities of color. Still, the surprise to me has been the severity of the differences for black Hoosiers' rates of infection and death as compared to the overall population. Statewide in Indiana, almost 30% of COVID-19 cases and 27.2% of deaths involve people of color, even though we make up only 12.4% of the total population. Marion County, in my district, has been identified as a national "hot spot." Here, African Americans comprise 30% of the population, yet make up 34% of the deaths attributed to COVID-19. Compared to white residents making up 66% of the population in Indianapolis but 47% of deaths.

It comes as no surprise that the black community, communities of color and poor communities are being disproportionately impacted. There is a long-held maxim that when America gets a cold, black communities get pneumonia. Stereotypes held by health care workers, lack of diversity among health care staff and a host of systemic inequalities facing communities of color continue to exacerbate poor health outcomes. But, this is a problem that absolutely can be addressed. That is why I urge you to accept my request to study, during this interim, the racial disparities in health care, and give this topic the prioritized attention this moment in time requires. The study should include input from the Interagency Council of Black and Minority Health and consideration of their previous policy proposals. The committee assigned this topic should also request updates from the Office of Minority Health within the Indiana State Department of Health on the status of their Minority Health Plan. To not address an issue made so obvious by our ongoing health crisis would be irresponsible.

By accepting this request, you would show that this topic is important and crucial to ensuring improved health outcomes for all Hoosiers, and that public policy can be an effective tool to help make Indiana a healthier and safer state. Thank you for your consideration.

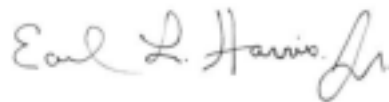
Sincerely,




Jean D. Breaux
Assistant Minority Leader
Indiana Senate District 34



Robin Shackelford
Chair, Indiana Black Legislative Caucus
Indiana House District 98



Earl Harris
Vice Chair, IBLC
Indiana House District 2



Ragen Hatcher
Indiana House District 3



John Bartlett
Indiana House District 95



Carolyn B. Jackson
Indian House District 1



Eddie Melton
Indiana Senate District 3



Gregory Porter
Indiana House District 96



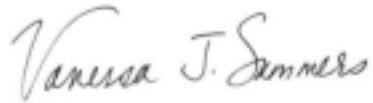
Cherrish Pryor
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Indiana House District 94



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Indiana Senate District 2



Vernon Smith
Indian House District 14



Vanessa Summers
Indiana House District 99