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Testimony Regarding the CT Data Plan
Dashni Sathasivam, MPH
CT Data Analysis and Technology Advisory Board
November 19, 2020

Dear esteemed members of the CT Data Analysis and Technology Advisory Board,

My name is Dashni Sathasivam and I submit this testimony on behalf of Health Equity Solutions, where I serve as Program Manager of Policy & Outreach. Health Equity Solutions is a nonprofit organization with a statewide 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 attain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

We are grateful for this opportunity to comment on the proposed 2021 – 2022 Connecticut State Data Plan and strongly support the state's efforts to elevate racial equity as a focal point of the drafted plan. As we have seen during this pandemic, reporting of race and ethnicity data is often an afterthought and the data is often incomplete; yet, these data are often key to identifying and course correcting to address inequities.

In addition, we respectfully suggest the following:

Directly acknowledge racism: While the supporting data provided in the Equity in the Data Life Cycle section states: "it is difficult to directly measure whether the use of data promote equity, particularly racial equity," we know that failing to intentionally center racial equity reinforces the norms of systemic racism. In addition, it is not accurate to say we are addressing inequities when we are unable to demonstrate progress towards this goal. We propose adding a statement that acknowledges the history of data being used to support policies and practices that result in disparate resource allocation, limited access, and poorer outcomes for people of color.

Implementation: We propose adding cultural humility and/or data justice trainings as examples of capacity-building opportunities to aid agencies in operationalizing equity.

Metrics: Consumer engagement is central to achieving equity across the data lifecycle and merits a separate metric for assessment. We also ask that in addition to consistency, the CT Data Plan consider benchmarks for the alignment of collection standards for race, ethnicity, and primary language factors across all agencies.

Thank you for considering these comments. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on a data plan that already aims to center equity and to advance data justice for communities of color. Please contact me at dashni@hesct.org or 860.322.6738 with any questions.