The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) is a professional association of over 25,000 physicians and medical students and advocates on behalf of patients for a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them to provide the best care possible. The Medical Society wishes to be recorded in support of House bill 2373 and Senate bill 1388, An Act establishing health equity at all levels in government (the HEALING Act), which establishes a comprehensive framework to promote health equity across different levels of government within the Commonwealth, aiming toward a holistic culture of taking health into account in all state policies.

Racism is a public health crisis that is pervasive in all sectors and industries, including health care, and damaging to the physical, mental, financial, emotional, and spiritual health of individuals and communities. Racism is a social determinant of health and is a root cause of health inequities and negative health outcomes, including illness and premature death. Acknowledging this is an essential first step in creating the structural and systemic change necessary for achieving equity. The next step is action. The MMS is committed to being an antiracist organization and we have developed an Anti-Racism Action Plan to guide us in our efforts to promote equity and racial justice.

The framework to promote health equity established by the HEALING Act lays the groundwork for meaningful progress toward addressing racism and reducing racial inequities affecting patients and public health. As we at the MMS endeavor to look introspectively at our policies, procedures, and culture to identify systemic racism and act deliberately to effect change, we appreciate how critical that having the right tools and knowledge is in those efforts. The HEALING Act ensures that the executive and legislative branches will have the support and knowledge, through things like the health equity assessment tool, to consider how future funding and policy decisions may differentially impact the health of Massachusetts residents, and this will be key to ensuring these policies are most impactful. Most importantly, the HEALING Act creates a Community Oversight Board to oversee and provide accountability for the HEALING Initiative and Interagency Task Force. This oversight board aims to empower community voices of those most impacted by inequities and those with expertise in health equity work.

Thank you for your consideration, for these reasons we strongly support and respectfully urge a favorable report on H.2373/S.1388.