

FEBRUARY 11, 2009

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF ALPHA PSI BOULE OF SIGMA PI PHI
FRATERNITY**

**SUBMITTED TO MEMBERS OF THE CONNECTICUT LEGISLATURE'S
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

**OPPOSING THE RECOMMENDATION OF GOVERNOR RELL TO
ELIMINATE THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN AFFAIRS COMMISSION**

TO:

**Senator Toni Harp and Representative John Geragosian
Appropriations Committee Co-Chairs
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700
Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106**

SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF ALPHA PSI BOULE BY:

**Dr. Booker T. DeVaughn, Jr.
Sire Archon of Alpha Psi Boule**

Madam Co-Chair and Mr. Co-Chair, and Members of the Committee,

I am Dr. Booker T. DeVaughn, Jr. and as Sire Archon of Alpha Psi Boule, I file this written testimony on behalf of Alpha Psi Boule of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity to oppose the recommendation of Governor Rell to abolish the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC).

My fraternity, Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity is best known as “the Boule”, a Greek term meaning “council of noblemen.”

Founded in 1904, Sigma Pi Phi is the oldest Greek-letter organization comprised primarily of African American men. It is not a social fraternity of college students. It is a fraternity of professionals. The Boule has more than 5000 members and 119 chapters throughout the United States and the Caribbean. Its membership consists of some of the most accomplished and influential men---leaders who are making lasting contributions to their communities, our society and the world. Members include Dr. W.E.B DuBois, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Earl Graves, Arthur Ashe, former mayor of Atlanta Maynard Jackson, and Kenneth Chenault, CEO of American Express.

Alpha Psi Boule is the Hartford chapter of this distinguished fraternity. Alpha Psi Boule was the first chapter of the fraternity chartered in New England on December 5, 1971. Our membership includes those with distinguished accomplishments in law, medicine, engineering, business, science, public service, nonprofits, and education.

Simply stated, our position is that the African-American Affairs Commission should not be eliminated. Instead, it should be retained and regarded as an important element in the fabric of the State of Connecticut. With regularity, we hear that important to the advancement of Connecticut are matters of economic development, workforce development, and community development. In each of these key areas the African-American Affairs Commission is a vital force. Founded in 1997 by the Connecticut General Assembly, the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) works tirelessly to promote all three of these State of Connecticut imperatives. It is a bridge between important communities of the state educating, advocating and presenting in a positive way information critical to informed policy making.

Through the Commission, people of color are given hope that they can be all that they are capable of. Through advocacy, people understand that disparities in education, health, and labor remain, but because of AAAC, things are getting better and will continue to improve. Entrepreneurs are encouraged to open businesses and hire people. Children are inspired to stay in school and study hard because there are opportunities in our state. Those employed in meaningful jobs become homeowners, tax payers, and citizens active in community affairs and other vital assemblies. They stay here and make Connecticut better.

Because I am sure that AAAC will read into the record details of the many accomplishments and initiatives it has been involved in to date, I will not repeat them

here, but I do underscore the vital contributions it makes to the welfare of our State and all our citizens.

Finally, I urge this Committee and the General Assembly to remember that there is powerful symbolic significance in the very presence of AAAC. It conveys to many of our citizens the message that this State understands that there are still racial issues to be addressed and those issues are being heard and considered through AAAC.

Alpha Psi Boule worries about talented individuals receiving an education and training in Connecticut and then leaving for more welcoming environments. AAAC is the best evidence that Connecticut cares and wants educated and capable people of experience to stay and become part of the solution in this incredibly challenging and threatening economic time.

For these reasons and more, Alpha Psi Boule strongly urges you to do everything within your power to oppose the idea that AAAC should be eliminated. Furthermore, we urge you to study the full record of AAAC and support vigorously its efforts to make Connecticut a better state for all its citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.