

Testimony for Public Hearing Appropriations Committee, March 05, 2015

Dr. Dennis C. Canterbury, State of Connecticut African American Affairs Commission
Commissioner for Windham Country
3 Handfield Avenue, Willimantic, CT 06226

Good Evening Appropriations Committee Members: My Name is Dennis Canterbury and I am a Commissioner for the African American Affairs Commission representing Windham County. I would like to thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Appropriations Committee.

I appeal to you to maintain unchanged the budget originally presented by the AAAC for 2016 and 2017. I make this appeal to you for the following reasons.

First, the AAAC faces severe budgetary constraints in carrying out its work in accordance with its legislative mandates to advance the overall quality of life for the African American community in Connecticut in matters pertaining to economic development, education, health and political well-being. These limitations are compounded by Governor Maloy's revised budget for the rest of FY2015.

Second, undoubtedly, further cuts to the AAAC's budget for the FY2016 and FY2017 would constrain to an even greater degree its already limited work in service to the African American community in the state.

Third, as you are aware the financial crisis and the economic recession it has spawned have caused great difficulty to the middle-class and inner cities of Connecticut. The AAAC was purposely commissioned to improve the conditions of this very population.

Fourth, to achieve its objectives albeit with a slender budget the AAAC is integrally involved with a number of legislative bills that impact our constituents. We have formed coalitions with African American Affairs Commissions across the United States. Our leadership in programs such as College Goal Sunday, which assists first time college students and their families to complete the Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) and access to grants and scholarships, is one way we help to impact the educational achievement gap and wealth disparity in the African American community.

Fifth, the budget as requested by the AAAC allows for a full staffing of our four positions, one of which has not been filled (Information Officer) in four years. Please do not ask the AAAC to put itself at a disadvantage again that will impair its ability to advance the just causes of the African Americans in Connecticut.

I would appreciate your support and careful consideration on the issue of keeping the AAAC's requested FY2016 – FY2017 budget intact as it was originally submitted.

Thank you for your valuable time and consideration.

Sincerely

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