



*State of Connecticut*  
*African-American Affairs Commission*

State Capitol  
210 Capitol Avenue  
Room 509

Hartford, CT 06106  
Tel. (860) 240-8555  
Fax. (860) 240-8444

E-Mail: [aaac@cga.ct.gov](mailto:aaac@cga.ct.gov)  
Web Site: [www.cga.ct.gov/aaac](http://www.cga.ct.gov/aaac)

Testimony for Public Hearing  
Appropriations Committee  
March 05, 2015

Alphonse Wright  
70 Greenwood Street  
New Britain, CT 06051

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*Alphonse Wright*

**Vice Chair**  
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**Senior Legislative Secretary**  
*Denise Drummond*

Good Evening Appropriations Committee Members. My name is Alphonse Wright and I am Chairman for the African-American Affairs Commission representing the town of New Britain. I would like to thank you all for this opportunity to testify before the Appropriations Committee.

Governor Malloy's revised budget for the remainder of FY2015 has already negatively impacted the work the AAAC is able to accomplish given our broad legislative mandates. I would implore you to support keeping the 2016 and 2017 budget as requested by the AAAC intact. Additional cuts to the budget of the AAAC for the FY2016 - FY2017 Connecticut biennium would be detrimental to the work the AAAC is doing to improve the overall quality of life for the African-American community, especially in the areas of economic development, education, health and political well-being here in Connecticut.

We are all aware of the negative impact the 2008 financial crisis has had and continues to have on our country and the citizens of Connecticut. The brunt of this economic downturn has disproportionately distressed the middle class and many others living in the inner-cities of Connecticut. This is exactly the population for which the AAAC was explicitly commissioned to ameliorate conditions. Their underserved needs scream for attention via the civic engagement our commission was mandated to do, especially in the slow recovery we are experiencing from the worst economic downturn since the great depression.

The AAAC has accomplished much in the last six months taking a leadership role in forming a coalition with several other African-American Affairs Commissions throughout the United States. Pooling our resources has allowed for a more uniform and strategic approach to tackle many systemic issues affecting the African-American community in our country, provided we maintain our funding as currently requested. In 2015 we have already worked on, or assisted with, compiling information for multiple legislative bills.

- Cultural Competency of educators in K-12 education
- Restorative Practices addressing chronic absenteeism/student drop outs
- Post-Secondary education student funding and debt
- Student Loan Bill of rights
- Access to affordable housing
- Access to affordable mortgages, fair mortgages and mortgage education



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- Housing Mobility counseling for low income home and apartment renters

We have partnered with the Urban League, NAACP, New Haven Promise and the Amistad Committee for informational, inspirational and recognition programs. These programs have had a direct and positive impact on the educational achievement gap and wealth disparity in the African-American community. Let me give you an example,

College Goal Sunday. College Goal Sunday is a program that walks first time college students and their families through completion of the Free Application for Financial Student Aid (FAFSA) and access to grants and scholarships. The AAAC has served over 6640 first time CT college students and their families with this program since 2008, including 940 this year.

Our alliances with these established organizations and other legislative agencies like CHRO and the Health Equity Commission have made us all more effective in our overall goals. We have assisted in providing testimony that was key to recent updates about citizens of the state that have been marginalized from heavy, uneven, and unlawful police practices for traffic stops . Findings from the Racial Profiling Prohibition Advisory Board will be released to the legislature and the public this month for 2013-2014.

With the diligent partnering of multiple legislatures in the General Assembly, we have gotten 17 out of 21 commissioners appointed to the AAAC. We look to have even more success in our legislative mandates once the final four commissioners are appointed which we expect relatively soon.

The budget as requested by the AAAC allows for a full staffing of four positions, one of which has not been filled (Information Officer) in four years. Please do not ask the AAAC to put ourselves at a disadvantage again that will impair our ability to be an effective, progressive force in the lives of many African-Americans in Connecticut. I look for 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,

Alphonse Wright  
Chairman, African-American Affairs Committee

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