

Dr. Dennis C. Canterbury, Vice Chairperson
State of Connecticut African American Affairs Commission
Commissioner for Windham Country
Professor of Sociology
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work
Eastern Connecticut State University
3 Handfield Avenue, Willimantic, CT 06226

February 18, 2016

Testimony for Public Hearing Appropriations Committee

Dear Senator Bye, Representative Walker and other Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Dennis Canterbury and I am a Commissioner for the African American Affairs Commission for Windham Country, and a Professor of Sociology in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work at Eastern Connecticut State University.

The mission of the African-American Affairs Commission (AAAC) is to improve and promote the economic development, education, health and political wellbeing of the African-American community in the State of Connecticut.

I am here today to support the governor's proposed budget for our Commission. While we would like to see more funding so we can do more work in the community we understand that these are tough budget times.

In the last year the AAAC has done great work with the legislature on student debt, criminal justice, education and housing. Some of our signature legislative measures were getting all teachers cultural competence training, creating the student loan bill of rights, working on racial disparities in suspensions and expulsions in our schools, and working on minority teacher recruitment. The AAAC participated in legislation to remove the municipal exemption from the MBE/SBE set-aside program. By lifting this exemption many minority contractors will be eligible to bid on projects that are in their own towns or municipalities. This is beneficial to the African American community because while the economy is recovering, black families are still faced with large unemployment numbers and the poverty gap in Connecticut continues to widen. We also testified on a bill that would broaden access to the small business express program for minority businesses. Both of these measures will help minorities to gain access to small business dollars, which are available in the state.

In the community we have held public forums to address racial profiling and we have been a part of numerous round table discussions and have worked closely with the

religious community to address disparities that continue to exist in our communities. We helped to organize in partnership with the Windham Town Council and participated in a town hall forum on racial profiling at the Windham Town Hall. We promoted the work of the AAAC on "Let's Talk About It," a Radio Show on WILI hosted by State Representative Susan Johnson and Mr. Dennis O'Brian. We furthered the activities of the AAAC at a public forum held at the Eastern Connecticut State University (ECSU). Most recently we collaborated with the faith community and collected bottled water to send to Flint, Michigan.

This year our legislative agenda includes working on legislation to ban the box for private employers, continuing our work to get more minority teachers into the classroom, addressing racial disparities that exist in debt collection and building upon the success of our student debt work.

Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee, I would like to thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

**Canterbury,
Dennis
(Sociology)**

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