March 8, 2018

Honorable Members of Education Committee:

My name is Rong Fan, Ph.D., a Cheshire resident and Professor at Yale University. Here I am writing to testify in regard of bill No. SB359 “Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic or Racial Subgroups in the Public School Information System”.

I am Chinese American. My kids grew up at a Jewish school in Hamden CT. This school is affiliated with the local Jewish cultural center, but the kids enrolled are of all races and from different places – Asia, Europe, Africa, Mexico and many other countries. Almost 50% of my own students who finished senior thesis in my lab at Yale and have gone on to study in medical schools are African American. There are the examples of equal rights in education. According to the history of our country, any movement that intended to further classify our people based on races was against the spirit of equal rights. Therefore, I would like to state the following and hope it can be heard by the education committee and our state legislators.

I support the original concept of “prohibiting educational institutions or other state agencies from mandatory collection and separation of data from students by subpopulations of national origin or ethnicity”. However, we are very concerned in regard of this portion of the current bill language “unless … collected uniformly across the entire population of students”. I believe the entire population shall not be subject to registry of ancestry immigration nation of origin or ethnicity origin.

I am supporting the original concept because I believe the spirit of United States of American (USA) represents an integration of different cultures from immigrants. Every generation of immigrants contributed, enriched and reshaped a constantly evolving identity of being American. This is the reason that everyone, especially every child, of USA is proud of being an American. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, “I look to a day when people will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character”, we support legislation that bans labeling kids as perpetual foreigners in name of data collection.

Please modify the bill language as to “No population of students shall be subject to data collection of ancestry national of origin and ethnicity origin”. Please vote for bill SB359.

Sincerely,

Rong Fan, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Biomedical Engineering
Yale University