March 8, 2018

Honorable Members of Education Committee:

My name is Aileen Jiang, currently live in Willington, CT. 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 support the original concept of this Bill because it is misguided and dangerous to link academic performance to race or ethnic group.

Why is it misguided?

Race or ethnicity is a coarse measure used in a period that no other information is available. Nowadays we know that a student’s performance is significantly impacted by environmental factors such as the student’s family’s social economic status, including poverty, lack of parental involvement and guidance, family members with addiction issues, drug and crime in the community, etc. These social economic factors can be changed and government policies can play a positive role in improving them. On the other hand, race or ethnicity is what a person is born with and cannot be changed. It is more directly related to genetic factors if we strip away the social economic factors. Do we want to collect data that would enable some ill-motivated people to establish a link between student performance and race/ethnicity? Do we really want to direct our efforts and budget to collect information on something that cannot be change? Or, do we want to instead focus on factors that can be improved by social and economic policies?

Why is it dangerous?

Collecting race or ethnic group data enables some people to draw wrong conclusions based on flawed studies. For example, a highly controversial study examines IQ among different races/ethnic groups. Ever since the study went public, racists have never stopped using the findings to make statements that “scientific research” shows that certain races/ethnic groups are intellectually inferior than other. The danger actually goes beyond that. We all know what happened to the Jewish people in Europe after the Nazis single them out and labels them in 1930s’ and 1940s’. Maybe the intention of collecting such information is good and noble, however, nothing beneficial could be generated from such data and the danger of it being misused is just too severe to ignore.

It could be a little bit late sending out this due to the snow storm and the power outage at our house. Thank you for considering and reading this testimony.

Best,

Aileen Jiang, CPA

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