



# Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance

**Testimony of Merrill Gay in favor of SB 256**  
**AN ACT CONCERNING RACIAL AND ETHNIC IMPACT STATEMENTS**  
Government Administration and Elections Committee  
March 5th , 2018

Co Chairs Flexer, McLachlan and Fox, and Members of the Committee: My name is Merrill Gay and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The Alliance is a coalition of over a hundred organizations ranging from individual childcare programs to statewide research and advocacy organizations. We represent a wide range of organizations that care for, and about, our youngest children.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today in support of SB 256 “An Act Concerning Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements.” Fifty years ago, the Kerner Commission concluded that the riots that had racked the country were caused by white racism. In those fifty years, much has changed and much has stayed the same. We elected our first African American president and are currently living through the backlash. Many of the most blatant forms of racism have disappeared, but the underlying implicit bias and structural racism persists. Decades after Elizabeth Horton Sheff and other parents sued the state about segregated schools, our schools remain largely segregated. Segregated not by explicit policies to keep children of color out of white schools, but by a structure of school systems based largely on town boundaries which, when combined with economic segregation, has the same effect.

There is a long history of public policy that perpetuates inequality in our society. From redlining of neighborhoods that prevented lending to decisions about where highways were built. Decisions that you are called upon to make every day from tax policy to appropriations can have an impact. That is why this bill is so important. The original law that this bill modified, has had the impact of raising up the inequity in sentencing by race within our prisons. Allowing legislators to request an equity impact statement for a bill can help shed light on the many policies, intended or not, that have the effect of perpetuating inequity in Connecticut.

It is easy to think that we are in the the liberal Northeast, this is really a problem in other parts of the country. To that sentiment, I would point out the 2015 Federal Reserve’s study of family wealth by race in Boston. The net median worth of white families in Boston was \$247,500 while the median net worth of African American families was \$8. The results were so startling the Boston Globe found it necessary to publish a second article the day after saying, “That was no typo, the median net worth of Black Bostonians is \$8.<sup>1</sup>”

The demographics of our country are rapidly changing, so it is imperative for the future of our society and our economy that we break down the barriers that have kept people of color down. Starting with the birth cohort of 2013<sup>2</sup> the majority of children born in this country are babies of color and in two years, by 2020, the majority of public school students in the United States will be children of color.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify, and I look forward to working with you to ensure that our youngest children can look forward to a bright future here in Connecticut.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2017/12/11/that-was-typo-the-median-net-worth-black-bostonians-really/ze5kxC1jJelx24M3pugFFN/story.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2016/07/01/484325664/babies-of-color-are-now-the-majority-census-says>