

3/5/19

Dear Members of the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Angela Clinton. I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to support Bill 7082 with the Students for Educational Justice (SEJ) amendments. This bill is important to me because as a white person who has spent a significant part of my adult life working to unlearn my internalized racism and understand and work to change the structural racism that has kept inequity in place throughout our country, I believe the inclusion of African-American Studies, the history of race, and the history of racism in the United States in the Connecticut K-12 Public School Curriculum will help all students learn about our history and set them up to change our future.

For the majority of my childhood I grew up in a primarily white town with a well-funded school district in Massachusetts. My public education curriculum was full of examples of heroes and heroines of white people. I remember no explicit teaching about African American people and their heritage. Beyond learning about slavery, I remember no explicit teaching about the history of race and racism in our country. It was not until I was in college that I started to understand the concepts of "race," whiteness, and anti-Blackness and the role racism played in the formation of the United States and the system of racism that is still alive in our country. That learning propelled me into being a community organizer and a diversity trainer and to work to understand the role I play in upholding systems of racism and to work to change the system. This is lifelong learning and lifelong work. I can only imagine the benefit for future white students like me to start that learning and to start the action of undoing the system from an early age. African-American Studies, the history of race, and the history of racism in the United States is American history that all students must know.

In developing the requirement, I urge you to create a curriculum-building Committee within the State Department of Education that would include teachers, experts on critical race theory, and students. I also urge you to include required racial bias trainings for social studies teachers and administrators as I am concerned that teachers of this course may cause harm as a result of their lack of knowledge on race and racism. I have participated in many anti-racism trainings, and I believe requiring such training can help to ensure that the courses are effective, high-quality, and taught consistently.

Thank you for considering such an important bill.

Angela Clinton
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