

**Instructions: Email your testimony to the following email: edtestimony@cga.ct.gov
With the subject line: "HB7082- Mira Debs"**

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

My name is Mira Debs, I am a parent from Hamden, Connecticut where I am a member of the anti-bias anti-racist parent group. I support Bill7082 with SEJ's amendments. As a white mother, this bill is important to me because all of our children need to learn African American history in school and the history of racism. Including this in our curriculum supports the academic success of children of color, recognizes historical and contemporary inequalities in our state and country, and helps raise our students to address them.

As a former high school history teacher, I developed a history curriculum to highlight the history of people of color in the United States. Even in a majority white school in the Boston suburbs, I considered this critical knowledge for my students to understand why they ended up growing up in an environment of privilege while others did not. But this is something that I did on my own, and many of my colleagues did not have this emphasis and their students did not learn this material. Having a policy to support teaching African American history would have helped my teacher peers and I in developing a uniform curriculum.

Now as a parent, I am proud to live in Hamden, Connecticut, a town whose diversity reflects the overall population of the United States. But diversity alone is not sufficient to ensure that all of the students in our town feel empowered, included and pushed to succeed at the highest levels.

Students in Hamden are 62% students of color, but 91% of our teachers are white. We have significant testing gaps, graduation readiness gaps and discipline gaps by race. The teachers have good intentions, but they cannot teach what they haven't themselves had the opportunity to learn.

Diverse schools alone are not a sufficient solution. Research shows that children become aware of race and begin to show race-based preferences as early as preschool. By age 5, children begin to internalize Eurocentric values and become afraid to talk about race. I've seen this among my own children when they came home in Kindergarten and reported that the "bad behavior" children were Black. I don't want our school system to punish children of color at higher rates than white children, or raise white children who make these kind of assumptions.

Our parent group is pushing for anti-racism training for our teachers and a more inclusive curriculum, but this change will be slow if we rely on community by community to ask for the change. State leadership in supporting the SEJ amendments including a focus on the history of race and racism in the United States, anti-bias training for social studies teachers and the creation of a state curriculum building committee are essential

steps if we are to meaningfully engage with inequalities in our state and raise our children to work to make them better.

Thank you for your time,

Mira Debs

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Mira Debs

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