

Shaneva Edwards

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

My name is Shaneva Edwards, I am a senior at Science and Technology Magnet High School in New London and I am a member of Hearing Youth Voices. I support Bill 7082 with Students for Educational Justice's amendments. This bill is important to me because as an African American woman, there is an inadequate representation of African American studies and culture in the school system. My educational experience has lacked this connection and empathy with my teachers because they do not look like me and do not experience the obstacles I face on a day to day. In our government classes, the lessons are pinpointed to amplify the efforts the Europeans had to conquer and diminish the African culture; the origins of Africa, their success and excellence and how they contributed into the making of America is not acknowledged at all. People have the misconception that all there is to Black History is slavery, but they fail to realize that Black History is American History. Living in a country whose foundation is built on the stealing, torturing, and enslaving of Africans all in the name of "This Land is Your Land, This Land is My Land" is difficult enough, without including the significant amount of obstacles carefully placed before us to downshift our excellence. People are not aware that Black life in America isn't as valued as it should be, and that we have to maneuver through life according to a higher agenda set in stone by the people in power. The Black experience is constricted and confined to only being expressed and taught in certain ways, suppressing its true importance and

the weight it holds. This bill would be incorporating more of its history in a classroom setting, which is a big step on the path to cultural sensitivity and the proper education about African American culture. Topics such as the African Diaspora, Africa's wealth and significance, and even going over racial inclusion, sensitivity, and awareness would pave the way for more unity and cultural understanding. Being knowledgeable about these key differences that affect our whole lifestyle is important and could create a form of cross cultural sensitivity that could be pivotal in the advancement of cultural competency in America.... All of this would stem from the implementation of African American studies in the school system.

Thank you for your time,

Shaneva Edwards