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To: edtestimony@cpa.ct.gov

Reference: House Bill 7082

I am writing as a resident of West Hartford, a parent of children in the public school system, and as a member of The Links, Incorporated to endorse House Bill 7082—an act to include African-American Studies in the public school curriculum.

Often when public schools address Black History, the focus is mainly on slavery and civil rights, and unfortunately without much context of the broader history up to this period and beyond. This minimalistic approach only serves to reinforce a message to our youth, and others, that black people are an inferior race. In fact, this approach lends itself to the intentional miseducation of blacks regarding our history and supports previous systems of slavery and subjugation, thus propagating further falsehoods pertaining to our history and ancestry.

To address this concern, I propose we set a context for a curriculum for African American history. It is important to preface the lessons on slavery and civil rights, which recounts the subjugation of blacks, with the history that empires and civilizations of black and brown people began well over 2000 years before the Roman Empire was established. It is important to note that people originated in Africa and the oldest civilizations were black and brown communities in the Middle East (referred to as the Near East in European history) and Africa. These very early civilizations - Mesopotamia, the Ottoman Empire, the Egyptian Empire, the Ethiopian Empire, and the Nubian Empire preceded the Roman Empire and flourished ahead of, and on par with, other civilizations until European Imperialization that began in the 1500's AD. From them came language, written communication, art, architecture, libraries, universities, philosophy, mathematics and algebra, domestication of animals, and many of the foundations of civilization today.

Civilizations of black and brown people throughout history continued to play leading roles in science, math, architecture, philosophy, agriculture, and many intellectual endeavors of civilization for over 3500 years before systemic repression began in the late 1500's. It is important to put into perspective that the last 500 years of black history is a fraction of the many thousands of years of black history that has led the way for civilization and human progress. Simple examples include the exclusion of the abolitionist roots of the Statue of Liberty and the contributions of blacks to the inventions of the light bulb, the design plans for Washington D.C., to name a few.

Without an updated curriculum for Black History, our students will continue to accept, without question, the subjugated status of black and brown people. This will surely stifle the contributions of our citizens, as well as the full potential of our society overall. A new curriculum would highlight various examples of the contributions of blacks such as the invention of the light bulb and the design plans for Washington D.C., to name a few, amongst a multitude of accomplishments and contributions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Karen Francis
Farmington Valley CT Chapter of the Links
The Links, Incorporated

The Links, Incorporated is an international, not-for-profit corporation, with a membership consisting of 12,000+ professional women of color in the United States. It is one of the nation's oldest and largest volunteer service organizations of extraordinary women who are committed to enriching, sustaining and ensuring the culture and economic survival of African Americans and other persons of African ancestry.