

Raven Gayle
Hartford Resident
Former Student of Passage, Inc

To the members of the Education Committee,

I am writing in support of HB 7082, An Act concerning the inclusion of African American Studies in the public school curriculum.

My name is Raven Gayle and I am currently a junior at Springfield College. Unfortunately, I am not able to be here today to speak in front of you all. On my behalf, Ms. June Lyons will be speaking for me.

First off, I never understood why we only had one month to celebrate the history of African Americans every year. I feel it is important to the Black and African American community to continue educating the young black childrens and adults who are still in school. Inputting African American studies in the public schools educates the students about the good African American and Blacks did in the past and continues to do today. In the media, We are portrayed in a negative connotation. The media has a way of making the world believe, we as Black/African Americans are people without morals and proper edicate. By teaching the students the content, concepts and perspectives to the curriculum allows ethnic and cultural content to be included as an adaptive and additive approach to Multicultural Education. We have fought for equity our entire life and we continue to fight today even though people are screaming that there are “equal” rights among everyone. The difference is that dominant groups have access and that there are inequities among certain groups.

In my First year of High School, I had the opportunity to be taught more about my roots and some very important people, who do not include Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks through a program called the Passage, Inc ran by Ms. Lyons. When I would go to this program we started off by learning about all the countries that were in Africa. I know you all are wondering, “why is she telling us about this?” Well, it significantly impacted my life. If you ask a student in the public high schools to list all the countries that are in Africa, the majority would not be able to do so. They will only tell you about the ones that are popularized by media, social media, music and maybe even a progressive History book. In the short amount of time of the program, Ms. Lyons had taught me more than what I would have learned in school. A curriculum like this is beneficial so students are aware of the issues we still face today and we need this to build their knowledge and understanding of the world today. More importantly, students coming from

marginalized groups need to be reflected in the curriculum and classroom and through these approaches they will be.

When Black History Month rolls around, students are taught about the same people over and over, as if there are not more individuals of color who have contributed to society. Why are we limiting the history of our people? To make it even worse, our history has always been taught by the people who oppressed us throughout history and even to this day. When implementing African-American studies in public schools we are promoting a healthy mind for our future, doctors, lawyers, engineers and many more. These students need to continue to know what doors were opened for them and the people who made it possible.

I hope to see the changes within the public school systems and really understand how important it is for the culture of Blacks and African Americans to be recognized.

Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Raven Gayle