

**Testimony Submitted to the Education Committee
by Robert M. Goodrich Co-Founder of Radical Advocates for Cross-Cultural Education-
RACCE,
March 6, 2019**

In Support of H.B. 7082 an act Concerning the Inclusion of African-American Studies, History of Race and the History of Racism in the United States in the Connecticut k-12 Public School Curriculum and **In Support of H.B. 7083** an act Concerning the Inclusion of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies in the Public School Curriculum.

My name is Robert M. Goodrich and I am the Co-founder of RACCE. RACCE is a grassroots advocacy think-tank that researches educational dilemmas in Connecticut, raises awareness, and advocates for racial equity in our schools. As educational professionals who design cultural competency training programs and curriculum as well as being former classroom educators in the k-12 setting and at various colleges and universities in the region we stand in strong support of H.B. 7082 and H.B. 7083.

It should be noted that our support is just as strong for the recommended amendments for these bills. As written these bills are not enough. As written these bills would just placate a skewed system dominated by white ways of thinking that are couched in Eurocentrism. African-American and Hispanic students, families and educators deserve an educational experience that centers their lives, cultures, and histories, especially, an education that accurately reflects the history of race and racism in America.

Specifically, the recommendations created by and supported by **Students for Educational Justice, Citywide Youth Coalition, and Hearing Youth Voices.**¹ These recommendations set new standards for curricular development, for implementation and accountability of cultural responsiveness and not just because the recommendations mention race and racism; not just because the recommendations fill a large regulatory or administrative gap but because these recommendations come from students. Rejecting these amendments would be an act of resistance to fair and just educational experiences for students of color.

The Metro Center at NYU, a nationally and internationally renowned institute for its work on educational equity and school improvement noted:

When students do not perceive their instruction to be personally and culturally relevant, student resistance appears in the classroom: resistance to curriculum, to instruction, to teachers, and to the very institution of school itself, which becomes constructed (recognized) by the student as antagonistic to their identities (Lee, 1999; Mirón & Lauria, 1998).²

¹ See attachment A

²Johnston, E., D'Andrea Montalbano, P., & Kirkland, D.E. (2017). *Culturally Responsive Education: A Primer For Policy And Practice*. New York: Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, New York University, p.19.

The persistent race-based achievement gaps in Connecticut can be reduced or even eliminated through a concentrated effort to make each classroom, school, and district more capable of being culturally responsive. However, curriculum or just simply mandating that districts check off another box in some sort of race-based curriculum contest is not enough. It is widely held by experts in the neuroscience of learning and education practitioners that, “[t]rue responsiveness requires ongoing preparation for the current teacher workforce in culturally relevant/responsive/sustaining pedagogies while at the same time creating a more diverse teacher workforce and improving training for incoming teachers.”³ Simply put a bill that doesn’t mandate educators receive appropriate and ongoing training from issue experts on African American and Latino history, critical race theory, race, and racism will ultimately fail to impact race-based disparities in our schools. We urge this committee to move these bills with the recommended amendments out of committee and voted on as soon as possible as to ensure districts start the rigorous planning and implementation process that these mandates would require.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Goodrich
Co-Founder, RACCE
rgoodrich@racce.net
(203) 597-7456

³Johnston, E., D’Andrea Montalbano, P., & Kirkland, D.E. (2017). Culturally Responsive Education: A Primer For Policy And Practice. New York: Metropolitan Center for Research on Equity and the Transformation of Schools, New York University, p. 40

Attachment A

Specifically the bill must include these provisions:

- For the school year commencing July 1, 2019, and for each school year thereafter, the Connecticut K-12 social studies curriculum shall include content on (1) African American Studies, (2) the history of race, and (3) the history of racism in the United States (the “Content”);
- The Commissioner of Education shall create an authoritative committee within the Department of Education (“the State Committee”) to design, oversee, and ensure that the Content is incorporated into K-12 social studies curricula;
- The State Committee shall promulgate and enforce appropriate rules and regulations specifying (1) the minimum required topical areas which shall constitute the Content, (2) the minimum required standards for measuring a Connecticut Public School’s success in incorporating the Content into its social studies curricula, and (3) any other reasonable standard which the State Committee deems necessary to carry out its authorized duties;
- The State Committee shall prescribe, design, and oversee the administration of mandatory annual racial bias trainings for all K-12 social studies teachers currently teaching in Connecticut Public Schools; and
- The members of the public shall be permitted to submit complaints regarding the exclusion of the Content from curricula and/or the existence of racism in the classroom directly to the State Committee for review and redress