



Good afternoon Members of the Educational Committee, and Committee Chairs Senator McGrory and Representative Sanchez,

We as Hearing Youth Voices, a youth-led social justice organization based in New London CT, are here in support of Bill 7082 with the amendments proposed by Students for Educational Justice. We stand with the belief that the passing of this bill with the implementations of the amendments will make for a *transformation in education* as we've known it. We are also hopeful that the bill's passing in Connecticut will serve as an example for the necessary shift that should happen in education *throughout the nation*.

Hearing Youth Voices was founded 7 years ago, *and for 7 years*, we've been listening to young people- specifically Black and Latinx young people- talk about their experiences in school. All throughout southeastern Connecticut, hundreds of young people have shared their stories with us, and these stories have helped us come to many conclusions about the state of our schools. First: the majority of curriculum currently in place is taught through a Eurocentric lens. Highlighting white presidents, white war heroes, white inventors, authors and activists. All of these teachings, although part of the story of America, are not the entire story. This story cannot be told without acknowledging the role that Black people in America have played in creating *the very foundation* of this nation.

Further, this curriculum is taught by a majority white teaching staff, which, for many Black and Latinx students, leads to a sense of isolation and lack of connection, which, research shows, negatively impacts student and teacher relationships.

We stand here today in full support of Students for Educational Justice's Amendments. We urge you to include the "History of Race and Racism" in the curriculum content. Our schools must teach all students- white, Black, Latinx, Native, everyone- the origins of the concept of race and the history of racism. That is the only way we are ever going to move beyond racism. Second, it would be an extreme discredit to the importance of this history if we assumed that teachers are prepared to teach this coursework. And I mean no disrespect to teachers. There is another bill being heard by this Committee today, regarding the teaching of computer science curriculum. That Bill includes a piece about making sure that the teacher preparation programs are preparing teachers to teach the new curriculum being legislated. Please, let's use that bill as a model and include that piece in HB7082.

Regarding the 3rd of SEJ's Amendments, we strongly encourage this Committee to create a Committee within the State Department of Education to create curriculum for our state.

This Committee *must be comprised of experts- academics, teachers, and students*. Most of us do not know our country's true history and most of us have a superficial understanding of the concept of race, how it was created, and what it has meant for our country's history and what it means for our present. Rather than leave it up to local districts to figure this out, we are confident that the creation of a committee to think more deeply about this project and its implementation would lead to better results.

Hearing Youth Voices also supports Bill 7083: An Act Concerning The Inclusion of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies in the Public School. We support this bill with the proposed amendments of Students for Educational Justice AND with the understanding that these bills will *remain separate*, centering the African ancestry, that, due to the transatlantic slave trade, is foundational to all of these cultures. It is imperative that we recognize how the construct of these racial identities have shaped the past, present, and future of our country. How these identities intersect and overlap throughout history but have their own distinct cultural footprint and that each should be taught with careful consideration, adequate training, and efficient teacher preparation. In other words; we need this, today. Right now. Young people deserve to be taught a full and more inclusive history and we need it done right!

*We are thrilled to welcome a new way of learning history in our state* and look forward to helping strengthen this process in whatever way we can. Please don't hesitate to reach out at any stage in this process.

Thank you for your time,

Hearing Youth Voices