

Terrell M. Hill, PhD, Asst. Superintendent for HR, Windsor Public Schools

Founding President of BLAC (Black Leaders and Administrators Consortium, Inc.)

IN SUPPORT OF H.B. NO. 7082 AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.

Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee, my name is Dr. Terrell M. Hill and I would like to thank you for this opportunity to express support of this bill.

We have recently concluded yet another February celebrating Black/African American History Month. As a Black man (my preferred description) I understand why Dr. Carter G. Woodson created this celebration in 1926. Woodson could see that the scientific study of Black people's history was not occurring. While his Negro History Week has grown into Black/African American History Month, I believe the true purpose of his celebration has yet to be realized. That purpose would be the inclusion of the history and accomplishments of Blacks/African Americans in mainstream American History.

We all can recount learning about George Washington crossing the Delaware, Thomas Jefferson drafting the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln freeing the slaves, and others such as Betsy Ross, Ben Franklin, or FDR to name a few. Even Alexander Hamilton's life has become a Broadway sensation, over 200 years after his death. But what did any of us learn in school about Black people in history? I am sure Dr. King, Rosa Parks, Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglas, and a few others were briefly discussed in some classes where the teacher saw fit to do so. But for a people who have been in this country from pretty much the start, we are eerily scarce in our history textbooks and curricula. The time is now for us to take action to correct this oversight (intentional or not).

Black people have been working for, and alongside Whites for over 400 years in this country. Why are our stories not told as part of the standard history curriculum? Should we see them as any less important than those of Whites? Former President Barack Obama said it best when he stated, "there is no White America or Black America, just the United States of America." As a nation we take pride in boasting to the rest of the world that we are a nation of immigrants and former slaves who have overcome to help build greatness. Why are we not making ALL of those stories a part of the mandatory curriculum... why are we leaving "history" out there as some sort of buffet or a la carte effort in which educators can pick and choose what will be taught or even talked about in class?

I have been an educator since 1992, and I have been doing work around Diversity and Equity since 1996. I am well aware of this nation's desire to "move forward" without going through the pain of acknowledging the past. This desire is played out in classrooms, and trainings around the country and inevitably manifests itself as anger, denial, guilt, or some other variation of "White fragility." It is my belief that the inclusion of African American studies in the mandatory history curriculum PK-12 would help our White students overcome that fragility as time passes on. They will go through school understanding the full and true history of their Black classmates and educators. They will grow to understand that history does NOT have to repeat itself, if steps are taken to prevent those actions.

I know there are many bills that will come through this legislative body this session, all are important in their own right, but I selfishly believe H.B. 7082 is one that will change the course of the state. If this country is ever to reach its professed potential, it will have to ensure the efforts of ALL of its citizens, past and present, are given equal appreciation. H.B. 7082 as put forth by the Education Committee, is a giant step in that direction.