

Dear Members of the Education Committee

My name is Dr. Laurel LaPorte-Grimes, I live in Manchester CT, and I am writing in support of HB 7082 An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African-American Studies in the Public School Curriculum.

Our education system and institutions have whiteness as the default. We have mostly white teachers and administrators, expectations for learning & behavior are based on the stereotypes & biases of these white teachers, administrators and even parents, and the curriculum in all subjects is overwhelmingly about people who are white. This creates a system where whiteness is the default, which is detrimental to non-white students and white students alike.

As white students remain the default, they are constantly receiving validation of their existence. Everywhere we look, we see people who look like us making history, creating art and scientific advancements. We don't even realize the deep benefits that we gain from a system where our race is always the one seen as producing greatness in our history and society. In fact, most of us wind up not even realizing that we have a race at all.

By contrast, non-white students, and especially black children, very rarely see themselves represented. They are relegated to only having representation one month out of the year, and even then it's typically the same small set of people that are discussed. The message this sends is disregard. We are telling these children that people that look like them are not important to the history of this country, when we know that the opposite is in fact true.

Passing HB 7082, including African-American Studies in the Public School Curriculum, is an important and necessary step to correcting this disservice that we currently do all of our students. I hope that you will take this step, and pass this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration,

Laurel LaPorte-Grimes, PhD