

Dear Members of the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly,

My name is Mellody Massaquoi, I am a student at Cooperative Arts and Humanities High School in New Haven and I am a member of the Citywide Youth Coalition and I support Bill 7082 with SEJ's amendments.

This bill is important to me because in my years of education, I've only learned about people such as Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Edison and George Washington. Not to say that all of these people aren't important however they are only a part of our nation's history and my entire history. As a result of this, I grew up believing that African American history wasn't as important as "regular history" and as a result, I only knew about white historical figures and moments in history that mainly centered around white people.

I didn't know anything else because important African American figures such as Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells and Booker T. Washington were either barely touched upon or swept under the rug entirely and I thought this was normal because no one around me objected or seemed to care. It wasn't until I started reading on my own and watching documentaries that I realized that not only have I been deprived of my history, but African Americans lead a huge role in America.

Also, when I am taught African American history, it is through the perspective of a white teacher. When you are taught African American history through the perspective of a white teacher, whether they are a good or bad teacher, they can sympathize and teach the class to the best of their ability but they will never be able to relate to their African American students. When an African American teacher teaches African American history, they have a deeper understanding with the subject and with the students because they most likely lived through discrimination. In my school, I take African American history as an elective and it is taught by two white teachers. Not to denounce their credibility because they do teach the history part of it well however they don't have a personal understanding of the course and they never will. As a result, some parts of African American history gets left out.

If this bill is passed it will have a great impact on me as well as younger African American children behind me. For example, having teachers take anti-racism trainings would be very impactful because now teachers aren't taught how to teach students of color and this is a problem because in classes, teachers can be unknowingly insensitive and with the anti-racism training, teachers can be more knowledgeable about what they say and do to and they will think about how it affects the students.

Having "The History of Race and the History of Racism in the United States" added to our curriculum is important because I along with all African American children in Connecticut can have the opportunity to learn about the great people before them and how much they impacted America as well as how and why racism is imbedded in our country.