

Natalie Mendes
44 Lawler Road
West Hartford, CT 06117

Connecticut House Democrats
360 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106
Attention: Representative Bobby Gibson

Re: House Bill 7082

Dear Representative Gibson and Members of the House Education Committee:

I am writing in support of HB 7082, an act concerning inclusion of African American studies in the public-school curriculum. As an African American and a product of the American public school system, I am painfully aware of the absence of the African American story in most history classes. When I was growing up the only time African American men or women of significance were mentioned was during Black History Month. I was well into adulthood before I began to understand how much Black people have contributed to this country.

African Americans have been an integral part of the American story for 400 years, beginning with the horrific years of “involuntary servitude”. Our history includes segregation, exclusion and marginalization, but, with perseverance and under the leadership of many untold heroes and heroines, we’ve made great strides.

The achievements and contributions of so many African Americans in the face of adversity is unknown to many of the students in our public schools. There is also the larger story of the impact of 200 years of free labor that fueled the southern economy as well as that of the northern states. This omission impacts the self-esteem of many African American students and has undesirable psychological effects. A more comprehensive treatment of African American history in our public schools is not a miracle cure but would go a long way toward acknowledging our place in American society.

Please send HB 7082 to the General Assembly for passage.

Sincerely,
Natalie Mendes