

Dear Members of the Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

My name is Ayzel Morales, I am a student at the University of Connecticut, I am from New London, Connecticut, and I am a member of Hearing Youth Voices. We, Hearing Youth Voices, support House Bills 7082 and 7083 and the proposed amendments made by the Students for Educational Justice. I would like to explain to you why these bills and these potential amendments are important. I was fortunate to have both my parents in my life. Both partook in my upbringing but I was raised by my grandmother, who was very stern. I was fortunate to have mentors who opened my eyes to injustice. To systematic racism. To the reality that minorities are in a metaphoric war for our own basic self improvement. We are losing this war because there are systems and forces, old and new which keep us in this state of inability to break the cycle of poverty, crime, lack of confidence to propel ourselves and ultimately our communities out of this cycle. The access to this information of truth is almost exclusive but I was fortunate enough to acquire it, at an age early enough to understand the situation and realize that myself and other like minded individuals must act. This seed of information planted within me the fire of activism and the desire to pursue education and any other opportunity to better myself as well as encourage others to do the same. The problem with our curriculum is that it in no way, shape, or form empowers minority students through their education. The only history taught regarding people that represent us is their demise and struggles but not their success. So from the start we see ourselves at the bottom and subconsciously accept our spot at the bottom. We are alienated from mainstream society by even being categorized with terms such as “minority”. An “other” group. Victims. These are the messages interpreted subconsciously, that we are a people that struggle instead of a people that strive. It’s a harmful indoctrination especially because we have attached those qualities to our identity. Providing the whole story from treachery to triumph will have multiple generational impacts because we would be engaging a positive perspective of our history and develop a positive sense of identity. The current curriculum fails to highlight, even merely acknowledge the success of minority figures in a world with the odds stacked against them. We have historical significance. Meaning we, people of color, have a responsibility for the course of human history as it has taken place. This fact has been disregarded for too long. The lack of acknowledgement towards that truth makes it an incomprehensible concept, which is the problem. Simple fact of the matter is, for our community to escape the oppression of misinformation, we must be informed. We must know. First and foremost, who and what we are. Know what we are capable of. Lastly, realize we are at odds in society based on our identity but then remember that people who share our identity had risen above this and we can too. With knowledge we have won half the battle. My last point is, to some degree every individual on this planet has a natural instinct, an inner force that inclines

them to help someone when they are aware that the individual is injured, ill, or in need of help. You can see that there are a people, that you may be familiar with as your peers, co-workers, associates, friends, or even strangers but above all they are your *neighbors* with whom you share your community, in need of aid as a whole and the most efficient remedy would be to empower their minds. Myself and the rest of the students here today are letting you know this is what your peer, friend, *neighbor*, need to improve themselves and their communities. I do not mean to attack anyone in this room, but if you don't support these bills and the proposed amendments, then you are against the improvement of your neighbor, and for what reason I cannot understand.

Thank you for your time,
Ayzel Morales