

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

My name is Kiara Ruesta, I am a student at the University of Connecticut from Vernon and I am a member of Connecticut Students for a Dream. I support Bill HB7082 with SEJ's amendments. This bill is important because having an understanding of the history of race and racism in the United States will bring awareness and an understanding of the political issues that are happening in current times.

My family migrated from Peru when I was thirteen years old. Up until that point, my education reflected the history of Peru pre-colonization civilizations, the "Conquista" of the Spaniards, and the independence from them. In these conversations, I had never heard of people identifying themselves by races since all of us identify ourselves as being Peruvians. It wasn't until I started my high school education in CT that I became labeled a "Latina" a racialized identity given to me by a system that didn't recognize or acknowledge how I identified myself. Through my education in high school, I was always the latina kid but no one told me what that meant and how this label reflects the way that many will later treat me. In my predominantly white high school, I was always looked at differently and isolated in my classes due to the eurocentric practices that most teachers had in their curriculum. Not once in my secondary education did I learn about the history of race and racism in the U.S. and how these are still prevalent in our current societies.

It was not until I got to UConn that I started learning about how the history of slaves in the United States as second class citizens is seen reflected throughout history with different ethnic groups. It is important to note that this information was provided by my Latino Studies and Sociology classes, which are optional to take for students. Through these classes, I was able to reflect in my own experiences in high school and to recognize the microaggressions that I had been a victim of because of insensitive educators. They also provided me with the language to identify

the different societal barriers that were imposed on my ethnic group by society. Learning through a critical race lens has provided with an understanding of the way that our curriculum has been built to silence the voices of people of color and to perpetuate the eurocentric narrative in our schools.

I support this bill because I believe that it is important to have teachers and educators that are aware and competent about the history of race and racism in the United States and how this relates to our current political and social climate. Also, I believe that every student in the state of Connecticut should have the knowledge and understanding of how the state has disenfranchised certain ethnic groups from their rights so that they can become informed citizens. These are the reasons why I hope that the committee votes favorably for HB7082.

Thank you for your time,

Kiara Ruesta