

Testifier: Shari A.P. Smith B.A., M.A., M.S.

Support for: House Bill 7802, *An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African-American Studies in the Public-School Curriculum*.

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

My name is Shari A.P. Smith and I am an Adjunct Professor at a local University, a corporate professional at a Fortune Financial Firm as well as a member of my local NAACP Chapter.

I have lived in and I am a resident of West Haven, CT, since 2016, after having lived in Milford, CT since 2009. I currently work in New Haven and have worked in various towns and cities throughout the state, such as Stamford, Norwalk, Westport, Southport, Milford, Clinton and Hartford.

I am in **FULL** support of **House Bill 7802**, *An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African-American Studies in the Public-School Curriculum*.

I first heard of this, at the Annual NAACP conference and was appalled to know that this critical portion of our nation's history has been neglected and withheld from the discourse, narrative and curriculum of the CT Public Schools.

As a social researcher and a sociologist, **House Bill 7802** speaks to me both on a very personal as well as macro societal level.

As a University Lecturer at a predominantly white university, I see the remnants of this disservice to our students, as my students are culturally unaware, timid, apprehensive and generally ignorant of the "others" around them. They have come to the university level, unprepared.

This is not their fault. It is our fault. We have left them unprepared to meet the challenges of society: to understand, communicate and relate to people who are not like them.

I had, what I now know, unfortunately, was the opportunity to learn about my history as a black woman. I cannot imagine a world, a classroom, a curriculum which did not include this. Having been exposed to this at every level of education, it was a norm that I thought was common place, which I have learnt now to not be the case.

Interestingly, we continue to question why institutionalized racism plagues our society. We continue to question we people are racist to each other. We continue to question the injustices suffered by our people. We have no one to blame, and will have no one to blame but ourselves, since we have not taught our children, white and non-white, what it means to be black. How can we expect civility, when our children just do not understand; they do not know any better; they are unaware; they do not know what they don't know.

In conjunction with my support for **House Bill 7802**, *An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African-American Studies in the Public-School Curriculum*, I also propose that there are required racial bias trainings for social studies teachers and administrators, supported by the creation of a curriculum-building Committee within the State Department of Education that would include, teachers, experts to be exposed to critical race theory.

African- American and Black History is American History. In order to beat racism, we and our children must understand racism, our history and our past.

Thank you for your time.

Shari Smith B.A., M.A., M.S.

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