

Dear Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Millie VandenBroek. I am an attorney at the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center in West Haven, a longtime resident of Connecticut, and a parent of two children in the New Haven Public School System.

I Support HB 7082 and SEJ's Proposed Amendments

I write to express my emphatic support for HB 7082 and SEJ's proposed amendments to the bill, including:

1. The amendment of the bill language to include "The History of Race and The History of Racism in the United States" as required curricular content (in addition to "African American Studies");
2. Required racial bias trainings for social studies teachers and administrators;
3. The creation of a curriculum-building and Oversight Committee within the State Dept. of Ed that would include teachers, experts on critical race theory, and students.

No one should graduate from high school in CT without understanding the History of Race and Racism, African American history, and the essential truth that African American history *is* American history.

My Story

I grew up in a WASP family in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to second-generation European Immigrants who lived the American Dream. Although I went to a highly regarded public school and took AP U.S. History, I did not learn the history of race and racism until I attended college. Even then, it was an elective. Yet learning the history of race and racism was an essential step in preparing me to participate as a voting-age citizen in this country's democracy, to work effectively as an attorney, to parent my children, and to be conscious of the specific social and political factors that created the conditions for myself—a white woman—and my white family to experience safety and economic security.

We Can Do Better in CT

We cannot achieve the ideals of this country without proactively educating our children on African American history, race, and racism. African American history *is* American history. Without required education on these issues, we will continue to create dysfunctional conversations about race and racism at all levels in our society, and we will continue to live in a country that provides the conditions for safety and economic security to some people and not to all.

You cannot walk 500 feet in any direction in Berlin without confronting memorials of the Holocaust; all children in that country learn about the history of the Holocaust in age-appropriate lessons throughout the public school system, beginning at young ages. It can be done here, too. We should ask no less of ourselves, in this country, in this state.

Many of our beloved public school teachers are already embracing this work—by seeking out antibias and antiracism professional development, and by thoughtfully incorporating our full history into their classrooms. I applaud their efforts and I applaud the efforts of SEJ to advocate that such an approach be implemented consistently across Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Millie VandenBroek