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**To the Co-Chairs and Members of the Education Committee**

**Testimony SUPPORTING HB 7082 *An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African-American Studies in the Public-School Curriculum***

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez and esteemed members of the Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you regarding House Bill 7082 An Act Concerning the Inclusion of African-American Studies in the Public-School Curriculum. My name is Patrici Wallen and I am an MSW Second Year student at the University of Connecticut. I am also a constituent of State Representative Gibson's district.

I do support this bill because African-American Studies is a part of the American history and I believe that there would be no history without it. Keeping African-American studies out of the public-school curriculum is encouraging what our great leaders during the Civil Rights Movement fought so hard to dismantle: **“separate but equal”**. The dominant narrative in this country continues to demean the very values and contributions that our past and present African-American leaders have made. When history focuses on slaves as victims without the larger context of the implicit and explicit racist policies such as voter suppression and redlining that limited the power and opportunities for African American's, all students are subjected to the dominant narratives in society. This systematic flaw encourages communities to be at war with each other. Understanding the power that exists within has the ability to enhance collectivity among our race, along with creating stronger and wiser communities. Instead of teaching and mentoring each other we are manipulating and tearing down each other. Black history is needed to allow society to comprehend Blackness through the record of Black agency and advancement in the context of systemic notions of White supremacy and racism (King, 2017).

History is so intriguing, as it provides us with information describing the migration of diverse populations; the roles and responsibilities of constituents at various stages in life throughout a specific period of time; and how innovations and

individuals manifest in becoming who they want to be. History is the blueprint that foretells what still needs to be done to create a better future.

I learned of African-American pioneers such as Whitney Young and Fannie Lou Hamer in my Political Social Work graduate class. Young was a strategic negotiator and Hamer was a determined organizer. I was very disappointed that I had not learned of both these great man and woman during my Windsor public school career. Knowing them then, would have made a greater impact growing up, giving me that encouragement that I belonged. Our history does not only start with Slavery and end with the Civil Rights Movement, it goes far beyond that.

I am a firm believer that when all students, especially students of color are taught about their history, they're able to appreciate and embrace how important and valuable they are. Past and present African-American leaders have made great contributions to make this country what it is today. The United States of America was and still is built on the achievements of African-Americans and this should be acknowledged. The educational system has failed in taking pride in celebrating one of the greatest cultures within our nation. African-American studies is just as important as any other study that is already implemented within the public-school curriculum. With only 180 days out of the school year, it is pertinent that all students, especially students of color identities are affirmed through an African-American curriculum. Let us continue the work of Carter G. Woodson and his colleagues to implement African-American studies that teaches all students, especially students of color the rich history of African-Americans.

I urge you all to act and pass this bill. Thank you

## References

King, L. J. (2017). The Status of Black History in U.S. Schools and Society. In *Social Education* (pp. 14-18). National Council of Social Studies.