

Kadri Williams
Resident of Windsor

To the members of the Education Committee,

My name is Kadri Williams and I am currently a senior at Windsor High School. I am writing in support of HB 7082, an Act concerning the inclusion of African American Studies in the public school curriculum. Unfortunately, I am not able to be here tonight to speak in front of you all. So, I write in hope to communicate my thoughts on this act.

From the beginning of my public schooling, every year the school would have a Black history month assembly and teach about slavery. Every year, we would briefly go over the history of slavery and trades. Then by the time you get in high school, you have heard the same teachings over and over again, that you can practically teach the class. It wasn't until my junior year that I took US History and was able to experience a new understanding of black history, today's news, and how they go hand and hand affecting future generations. Why did it take until I actually had a teacher who was so deeply in love with history, took the time in class to discuss her opinions, and get the whole class to begin discussing the topic? Then when I enter my senior year, I take civics and again I have a teacher who is so involved in the news, humanitarianism, and politics. A teacher who decided to bring in the everyday news and give us time to discuss on the matters and introduce new historic facts that were buried in common history. Why was it at that time, some of the students had very little understanding of this history and had to learn what I learned every year since elementary school? That's a problem.

People have heard about black panthers, the little rock nine, MLK Jr., Rosa Parks, civil rights act, history dated back to slavery trades, plantations, and Harriet Tubman. The media has told my generation of police bias to blacks, Trayvon Martin, Trump, deporting immigrants, separating kids from families, white privileges, and etc. These type of topics would spread like wildfire throughout the school and would catch our attention. The Media can be very manipulative of how people and topics should be perceived, making it either a bad or good way for children to be taught.

By teaching students through an African American Studies curriculum, they would have a better understanding on how history impacted the world of today and how black history is made everyday and continues to affect decisions, reactions, and people. People would have more educational contribute of discussions and be able to understand/interpret media. Many, including the people of today and myself, have fought for change and equity among the people of the world. There are others like myself, who have dreams to make a change in the world. I have had the goal of being a Mechanical/Robotics engineer and have been constantly reminded and warned about my color and how people will receive me. I've even been given comments on how strange I am for wanting to enter a "white male dominant" field or should change my goals. I fight everyday to stand where I am and not be perceived as a person fighting for simply equal rights. There is a distinct difference between equal and equity and should be taught to those who question the purpose of black history being taught and why it's held in people's heart.

From fifth grade to seventh grade, I had the great opportunity to be taught more of my African roots and history outside of the schools' normal teaching of Ruby Bridges and slavery. I attended a program called Passage Inc. ran by Ms. June Lyons. During this program, I studied, learned, and memorized every country of Africa and was able to recite and map it out. I learned of the impact of black history, how the media described black arrest compared to whites, different myths and concepts of slavery, and actually saw the different punishments and beatings given. We would watch movies based on true stories of black people never mentioned in class. We discussed today's society and how the laws and Congress could create change to better the numbers of employment and healthcare, we learned of adulthood and social concepts that people fall into loops. She taught me how to stand up for myself and gave me the support I needed to go through with my dreams and get involved. I'm telling you this because her program severely impacted my life and mental construct. If you were to ask a random student in public schools about black history, or to map out Africa, or to write about the meaning of African american history and how it affects them, you would most likely get a generic answer mixed with news or what the school had taught them. By being in the program for the short time, Ms. June had established in me a strong foundation in black history and in result caused a higher and better

growth in my social conduct, how to interpret media, and be able to even teach students on information they never heard of in school or home. Now imagine, if every child from a young mentally absorbing age had been in a similar African American curriculum that went beyond the common history lesson. A curriculum like that would benefit the future generation and create a higher awareness in the issues of today's society. They would be able to improve and build a higher knowledge on the matter and evolve social conducts creating a possible greater american system and how non white groups are perceived.

People shouldn't be limited to learning the same routine of the school curriculum or experiencing the same speeches during Black History Month. We should be taught by people like my Civics and US History teachers eager to benefit and contribute to children's mental growth and understanding of history and today. I urge this committee to support this bill and recognize the importance of establishing African American Studies in Public schools. This would be influential for the future programmers, engineers, nurses, lawyers, social worker, and more! I hope to see these changes in the public school systems and a strong realization of how beneficial it is for the culture of African Americans, and black people of differing ethnicities, to be recognized and honored for their contributions to our lives. Thank you for your time!

Sincerely,

Kadri Williams