

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

My name is Mercy Yalartai, I was a student at Mauro Sheridan Communications and Technology Magnet School and Metropolitan Business Academy from New Haven, and I am a member of SEJ/ Hearing Youth Voices/ etc. I support Bill7082 with SEJ's amendments. This bill is important to me because it is beyond time to have comprehensive representation within our education that is reflective of my ancestors' contribution to this country. It is time for students to truly understand who and where they come from, and what history shows of who we can become.

During primary and secondary school, while teachers attempted to work within their limited means, I often felt something was missing. What I have learned throughout my young life is that history is told through the lens of those with power, the self-proclaimed "winners," and it is to their advantage to effectively erase others and their contributions from that history. Those "others" were my ancestors, erased were their contributions and existence from history. My only memories of African American history are of slavery and individuals like Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr. While these names are important, this list is incomplete. There was no mention of Ida B. Wells, Shirley Chisholm, Bayard Rustin, the importance of the Black Panther Party and their contribution to our communities, and Dr. King's Poor People's Campaign. Learning about Shirley Chisholm, the first black person to run for president, would have shown me I was capable of amazing things and that there was no limit on what we could do as a people. This is the importance of SEJ/ Hearing Youth Voices, it allows us the space within our curriculum to see ourselves and to have a comprehensive history. As well, learning about the history of race and racism means confronting the atrocities of the U.S.'s past and understanding how it has manifested into the present. Ultimately, It means honestly addressing that painful history. In addition, teachers will have a deeper understanding of their students and how to connect to them. I hope you all listen to our stories and pass this bill.

Thank you for your time,

Mercy Yalartai