



University of Connecticut  
*African Studies Institute*

March 6, 2019

Dear Chairman Senator Douglass McCrory and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Brittney Yancy, a resident of Vernon, and currently an Assistant Professor of Humanities at Goodwin College and finishing my doctorate in United States History at the University of Connecticut. I am from St. Louis, Missouri, but for the last twelve years, I have made Connecticut my home. I submit this testimony in support of H.B. 7082/H.B. 7083 with the amendments from the Students for Educational Justice (SEJ).

I support these bills for the following reasons. As a black woman, I am still dealing with the trauma and effects from not having an intersectional and inclusive education. An intersectional and inclusive education would provide all students, but specifically our black and brown students, with a self-affirming experience in the classroom. Full integration of African American Studies and Latin American Studies tells students of color that they belong to a rich legacy that is respected and honored in the American record. This is the real outcome and reward.

For the last 10 years, I have taught Introduction to African American Studies, American History, Women's History, and African American History at the University of Connecticut and recently, Goodwin College. I am always shocked by how ill-equipped my students are when they arrive. They are unprepared to engage questions about racism, sexism, and all the "isms." There is a complete lack of understanding and curiosity about the long history of African Americans and Latinxs. I have witnessed students defer to false narratives and stereotypes about black and brown people, and these shortcomings contribute to discrimination, bias, violence, and systemic barriers that further harm and disenfranchise people of color. I could share a litany of examples, but simply stated, we are doing a disservice to our students and we are not preparing them to become competent global citizens.

As a professor and historian, I am equally concerned with the implementation of this curriculum. It is not enough for this bill just to pass without thoughtful consideration from this committee about who will manage the curriculum design and professional training. How will Puerto Rican history be taught in Connecticut? Will the African American curriculum be designed based on an African-centered, intersectional model? Will African American and Latinx scholars train teachers on this curriculum? I am concerned with these questions.

This bill is not a symbolic measure; this bill is about making real change in our state and preparing our future leaders. You have the opportunity to expose future generations to a fuller American history, but you also have the responsibility to ensure that the implementation process is thoughtful and dignified. Please lean on the historians across this state as you move forward.

I would like to end with words from the "Father of Black History," Dr. Carter G. Woodson:

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“Real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly”

How are we inspiring our students with an uneven, diluted education? I encourage you to pass these bills and you will see your return and reward in generations to come. Thank you Representative Bobby Gibson for your leadership and the entire committee for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Brittney Yancy