



Testimony of Jan Hochadel
President, AFT CT

**Senate Bill 956: AN ACT CONCERNING A
COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROGRAM**

**Senate Bill 957: AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF COMPUTER SCIENCE INSTRUCTION IN
THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM, PROGRAMS OF TEACHER
PREPARATION AND IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR TEACHERS.**

**House Bill 7082: AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN
STUDIES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM.**

**House Bill 7083: AN ACT CONCERNING THE INCLUSION OF PUERTO RICAN
AND LATINO STUDIES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

Education Committee
March 8, 2019

Good morning Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, and members of the Education Committee. I am Jan Hochadel, and as the President of AFT CT I represent over 15,000 teachers and other school related personnel, including paraprofessionals. It is on their behalf that I testify on Senate Bills 956 and 957, and House Bills 7082 and 7083.

All four bills propose expanding the curriculum to cover important areas of study not currently identified as required subject matters in Section 1, Section 10-16b of the general statutes. Before I was elected as AFT CT President in 2015, I was a physics teacher in the Connecticut Technical High School System. I know the frustration educators feel when they are told they must teach new material, but without more time and often the resources to do it. Yet it is the responsibility of this body to ensure that our students are taught the content necessary to be successful citizens of Connecticut. House Bills 7082 and 7083 take on this task by identifying African American and Latino history as areas of study within the social studies curriculum. They will stand with government, citizenship, economics, and others as areas of study included in the social studies curriculum. These bills address an important area of need within Connecticut education. AFT CT has been in the forefront of the movement to recruit and retain teachers of color in our state. We remain woefully lacking in that area. While we work to make our workforce more diverse, our current teachers need to be encouraged to teach the history of people of color and be provided the materials necessary to do so effectively. These bills address the need of all our students to learn about their past without creating an onerous burden on the district to create and schedule new programs.

Senate Bills 957 take a different approach. The bill mandates that computer science be required as a distinct area of instruction, in the same manner as physical education, art, social studies, and others. This requirement would be in effect July 1, 2019 and thus must inform the 2019-2020 school schedule. While the goal of the bill is noble – clearly, all students need to be computer literate – it would be very difficult to implement practically within that time frame. Most schools are well into the process of developing their schedule for next year and would not be able to adjust it to account for a new requirement for next year. Moreover, as Connecticut seeks to provide multiple pathways for student success and create magnet schools that specialize in specific areas, adding another required class makes scheduling impossible. In the technical schools where I taught, the new world language requirement has proven impossible to implement simply do not have the time in their school day to reach the hours needed for the apprenticeship or licensure in their trade, receive the math and literacy support necessary for success, and also have a full year of a language. The district does not have the funds to hire 17 world language teachers. Other schools that have specific areas of instruction are facing the same problem. If districts were provided the option of world language or computer science instead of being required to offer both, the districts might have the flexibility required to meet the unique needs of their schools and their students.

SB 956 requires the State Board of Education, collaboratively with the Connecticut School Counselors Association, to ensure that “all students have access to a comprehensive school counseling program that provides academic, social-emotional and post-secondary and career readiness programming by a certified school counselor with adequate training.” The social-emotional readiness of students is crucial, and bills this session address the implications of what happens when students do not have that readiness. We support this bill as long as the Board creates guidelines broad enough to address the realities in the building. Counselors must be able to deal with emergencies as they happen, which is why some collective bargaining agreements prohibit them from being assigned classes or coverage. Budget cuts have left many districts so short of counselors that student needs are not being met. If Bill #956 is implemented so that counselors have help addressing their responsibilities, we would enthusiastically support the bill. If the bill adds to their responsibilities, it will do real damage to the counselors themselves and the students they serve. It is impossible to know the effect of the bill without seeing the guidelines and their implementation.

Thank you.