



TESTIMONY BEFORE THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Amy Dowell, Connecticut State Director

Education Reform Now Connecticut

March 26, 2021

Re: **Support for H.B. 6662: An Act Declaring Racism As a Public Health Crisis and Establishing the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health**

Co-Chairs Osten and Walker, Vice Chairs Hartley, Dathan, and Nolan, Ranking Members Miner and France, and Members of the Appropriations Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide **testimony in enthusiastic support of H.B. 6662**. My name is Amy Dowell, and I'm the State Director of Education Reform Now CT, an advocacy organization that promotes educational equity.

In order to pursue fair access to educational opportunity for all Connecticut students, many of our efforts necessarily involve tackling institutional racism—often in areas beyond the classroom that intersect with the experiences of Connecticut students. Whether covert or overt, the same racism that leads to inequitable access to high-quality education also infects economic opportunity, healthcare access, criminal justice, housing, resources, and more. It is a public health crisis that leads to inter-generational oppression, both historical and ongoing. If we are ever to achieve educational equity for Connecticut's students, we need a proactive, strategic approach to combating racism.

That is precisely why this bill includes so many education metrics towards measuring its goals, including: kindergarten readiness, third grade reading proficiency, assessment scores, rates of school-based discipline, high school graduation rates, and retention rates in higher education. When we begin to deliberately and comprehensively address the intersectional issues that impact the lives and health of students of color, public education will reap the benefit.

For these reasons, we wholeheartedly support H.B. 6662. Whatever administrative costs the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health will incur, they are nominal by comparison to the enormous—and often immeasurable—moral and economic costs of racism in our society. Please support H.B. 6662.



About Education Reform Now CT

The state chapter of a national organization, Education Reform Now CT is a 501(c)(3) that operates as a think tank and policy advocate, promoting great educational opportunities and achievement for all by increasing equity, protecting civil rights, and strengthening the social safety net.