

**Lillian Bertram - Testimony SB1034 DRAFT (3/15/2021)**

Written Testimony for SB 1034: An Act Concerning Minority Recruitment and Retention

Education Committee Public Hearing, March 17, 2021

Dear Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez and members of the Education Committees ,

My name is Lillian Bertram. I am a student at the University of Hartford majoring in Entrepreneurial Studies. This semester I have been given the opportunity to be a preceptor where I work closely with a professor to teach a communications course. Within the first week of the course, I had given a presentation where I described how my hair as a Black woman characterizes me. After class, the only Black student in the course, walked up to me and described how much she related to and enjoyed my presentation. As I helped teach this course, I developed an interest in educating. Unfortunately, my goal to be an educator is impacted by my skin color.

In my academic career, I've had the luxury of having three Black teachers. I say *luxury* because it isn't often that students are able to have Black teachers throughout their academic careers. In my case, those three teachers have impacted my life on an academic level as well as a mental and emotional level. I will always remember the moment a Black teacher noticed my discouragement after a student called me the N word. Outside the classroom, the teacher explained to me that I needed to continue to work hard because opportunities aren't handed to people like us, but opportunities are things we have to fight for. During and after our classes,

we'd have extensive talks about the social injustices Black people have to face. Many of these conversations brought the students of color closer to this teacher. I am not saying that a White teacher couldn't have helped me through that moment, and I am not saying that a White teacher is incapable of providing insight on social injustice. However, as students, we find comfort and inspiration knowing that the people who teach us have experienced our struggle and are a living example of breaking free from that struggle.

In high school, Black staff members always referred to me as the political activist: Angela Davis. I found this to be empowering. When I would hear praises from Black teachers or staff, it showed me that I can do more than *make* a change. I can *be* the change.

Today, I am deciding to be the change for students across the country. I am going to pursue a career not only in business, but also, in education. Senate Bill 1034 is necessary in helping me reach my goal. With this bill, future minority educators, such as myself will be able to teach heart, teach power, and teach students that they are more than the color of their skin.

Thank you!