



# R.A.C.C.E.

Challenging systems of oppression by advocating for culturally competent educational practices.

## RADICAL ADVOCATES FOR CROSS-CULTURAL EDUCATION

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Testimony Submitted to the Government Administration and Elections Committee  
In Support of S. B. No. 256 An Act Concerning Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements

Good afternoon Senator McLachlan, Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee.

In 2008, the Connecticut General Assembly made a promise, a solemn promise to start using legislative tools that would make racial equity a filter for some legislation coming out of the Judiciary Committee. The usage of Racial Ethnic Impact Statement (REIS) was to be the new standard by which laws influencing penal and criminal codes were to be measured. Sadly, but predictably the passage of PA 08-143 has had little impact on our state because its never been used forcefully or effectively.

Since then, the disparate rate of incarceration (adults and juveniles) for Connecticut's African American citizenry has increased despite the rate of decarceration our state has experienced.<sup>1</sup> Our schools have been unable to plan for and produce more equitable educational experiences for Black and Hispanic students. Largely because the laws that prescribe funding and the laws that mandate teacher and school district evaluation have routinely failed to focus on or provide tailored solutions for minority students across the state.<sup>2</sup> For over 25 years non-white citizens have experienced greater rates of death from cancer, stroke, diabetes, and heart disease.<sup>3</sup> All of this, despite all of our best intentions, still persists. As the esteemed William R. Dyson predicted, PA 08-143 was passed but nothing has been done.<sup>4</sup> Let me echo Mr. Dyson's comments about racism. When asked about the role racism plays in the legislative process he said, "The legislature represents the

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<sup>1</sup>When comparing the PPI's 2010 report on Connecticut's Prison Population and The Sentencing Project's 2015 report "The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in State Prisons" one can see that in 2010 the Blacks were incarcerated at 9.3 times greater than whites and in 2015 Blacks were incarcerated at 9.4 times the rate of whites.

<sup>2</sup>Looking at the fact submissions from the CCJEF plaintiffs (<http://civilinquiry.jud.ct.gov/DocumentInquiry/DocumentInquiry.aspx?DocumentNo=9879304>) and comparing them to the recent study by Education Post, "Funding Gaps: An Analysis of School Funding Equity Across the U.S. and Within Each State," where it is identified that students of color who attend majority minority districts are shortchanged by over 4% per student one can easily identify the disparate outcomes.

<sup>3</sup>Connecticut Department of Health 1999 report "Multi-Cultural Health."

<sup>4</sup>Legislative History and Transcripts for Connecticut Acts in 2008; P.A. 08 143, p. 45-50.

broader society. What exists in the broader society exists there.”<sup>5</sup> Even last year Senator Gary Winfield, also a former representative of the 94th district, encouraged the Connecticut General Assembly to pass an enhanced version of the 2009 bill but it didn’t make it to the House for a vote.

Isolating one continuing problem with our laws and policies that govern school funding would be an imperfect but truth-filled way to raise awareness about the usefulness of an REIS. The Connecticut Supreme Court’s ruling on CCJEF gave back to the legislature a system that perpetuates inequality and shoved all of the responsibility to fix it back to our elected officials. It should be noted that the 5,000 exhibits, 2,000 fact admissions, 826 full exhibits, 50 witnesses, including nearly 20 education and financial experts, and 1,060 individual findings of fact were not found to be untrue. These facts have not been ignored but because of the claim that a funding formula hasn’t been created that would address the racial inequity in our schools the inequity remains. A broad but forceful REIS could be the tool that helps fix a broken school funding system.

In 2008 the idea of an REIS was new to us and other states. Over ten years have passed and the idea is no longer new and is being embraced in pockets across the country. The federal government, state legislatures, states level agencies and commissions, municipalities and even private organizations have embraced the use of REIS.<sup>6</sup> **S.B. 256** is just a starting point maybe even as its constructed its eerily similar as the 2009 bill because its situated as a symbolic gesture. This bill, to be effective will require funding, enforcement, and a rigorous implementation plan. This is why we urge the committee to act in manner that reflects the urgency that a crisis demands.

Respectfully,

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<sup>5</sup> A NY Times Article; “[Q&A/William R. Dyson: Politics With a Very Personal View](#),” written by Melinda Tuhus in 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Here is a brief history of REIS/REIA: (1) Executive Order 12898 - Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations E.O. 12898, from the National Archives 59 FR 7629; February 16, 1994 (2) Washington State of HB 2376 Section 125(2) passed by Legislature December 27, 2016, (3) King County, WA The County government is using an Equity Impact Review Tool to intentionally consider the promotion of equity in the development and implementation of key policies, programs and funding decisions, (4) Oregon 2013. Senate Bill 463 Oregon, (5) Iowa 2007, House File 2393, Legislative Services Bureau completes REIS, (6) Seattle, WA City Departments are using a set of Racial Equity Analysis questions as filters for policy development and budget making. (7) United Kingdom starting in 2000, all public authorities are required to develop and publish race equity plans must assess proposed policies using a Race Equality Impact Assessment.