

Testimony Opposing S.B. No. 851 An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups in the Public School Information System

Camara Stokes Hudson
Education Committee
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Senator McCrory, Representative Sanchez, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and the esteemed members of the Education Committee,

My name is Camara Stokes Hudson and I am testifying today on behalf of Connecticut Voices for Children, a research-based child advocacy organization working to ensure that all Connecticut children have an equitable opportunity to achieve their full potential. **Thank you for providing this opportunity for us to submit testimony in opposition to S.B. 851: An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups in the Public School Information System.**

Every child in the state deserves a high-quality education that allows them to pursue their chosen dreams and goals. By many estimates, Connecticut has provided a quality education to many students, even ranking third in the nation for our K-12 education system in 2018.ⁱ But not all students in our state experience robust educational opportunities. Across the state, the 48 percent of students who identify as students of color experience clear differences in their treatment in schools, access to educational opportunities, and academic outcomes.^{ii, iii} These disparities act as barriers to success for these students, for their communities, and for the state as a whole.

Disparities in access to quality education for students of color can only be identified and addressed on a state level if lawmakers, school officials, and community members have access to data that isolates student race/ethnicity. This requires that school districts collect data about students' race/ethnicity *and* that schools and the state be able to use the tool of data disaggregation to examine student data. Data disaggregation refers to a specific type of data analysis where information is broken down to look into smaller subpopulations. Data can be disaggregated by many types of categories: gender, age, disability status, and race/ethnicity are a few common categories for analysis, but for some metrics, like Smarter Balanced test scores Connecticut also disaggregates by student foster care, homelessness and military family status – all groups of students that experience unique challenges to accessing a quality education. Aggregated education data (data that is not broken up by category), on the other hand, simply does not tell enough of the story for policy makers, administrators or advocates to effectively support students of color because statistical averages tend to be more reflective of the outcomes of numerically larger groups (in Connecticut's case, White students).

SB 851 will prohibit the disaggregation of student data by race/ethnicity with two major caveats: federal requirement of race/ethnicity data or if the state were able to disaggregate data on every single ethnic subgroup in the state. Given the sheer number of ethnic subgroups that exist, it is effectively impossible to disaggregate data to this level of granularity. This level of disaggregation would also pose legal concerns in that it may violate FERPA confidentiality regulations that protect the identities of students. If enacted as written, the legislation would prevent data from being further disaggregated by ethnic subgroups despite the significant amount of evidence that a student's ethnic background, not just their race

as defined by the “top-five categories,”^{iv} could have relevance in their educational experiences and outcomes. National data provides two examples of this:

- High school completion rates vary widely within Asian ethnic subcategories. Thirty-eight percent of adults who identify as Hmong and 37 percent of adults who identify as Cambodian have less than a high school diploma. In comparison, 9 percent adults who identify as Asian Indians have less than a high school diploma and 19 percent adults who identify as Chinese have less than a high school diploma.^v
- While 32 percent of adults who ethnically identify as Columbian have completed college and 24 percent of Cuban adults have completed college, the rates of college completion for other Latino American ethnic groups range from seven percent (Salvadorians) to 16 percent (Puerto Ricans).^{vi}

While it would be impossible to disaggregate race/ethnicity data by *every* ethnic sub-category, there should be the ability to disaggregate by ethnic subcategories with significant populations in the state. For example, people who are Puerto Rican, children included, make up well over half the Latino population in the state.^{vii} A more detailed disaggregation of race/ethnicity data would reflect this by not just reporting the data for Latino students overall but also reporting the data for students of Puerto Rican origin specifically. After Hurricane Maria, Connecticut’s schools saw an influx of Puerto Rican children with unique needs such as behavioral health needs as the result of experiencing trauma, and language instructional needs.^{viii} The practice of disaggregating data by ethnicity helps the state identify needs and target resources to these children and the schools they attend. Furthermore, the practice of further disaggregating data for Asian and Pacific Islander subgroups has even been recommended by the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in 2016.^{ix} This would allow all education stakeholders to gain a more accurate picture of the students in Connecticut’s classrooms and the types of supports and services that they need.

For this reason, we oppose changing the education statute to prohibit the disaggregation of race/ethnicity data, even with carve outs for federal requirement and reporting on all ethnic subgroups.

It is now commonly acknowledged in education research that disaggregating student data by race/ethnicity has a positive impact for students in that it informs how schools can improve experiences for children of color.^{x,xi,xii} Policy priorities like reducing suspensions and expulsions, improving ELL instruction and decreasing chronic absenteeism all require that we take a look at data disaggregated by race/ethnicity. While the legislation proposed to date in 2019 does not prevent the disaggregation of data by the “top-five categories”, it is representative of a broader attack on the use of race/ethnicity as a meaningful factor in creating equitable education policy. **When we know unequivocally that race plays such a significant factor in the educational outcomes of our students,^{xiii} it is essential that we are able to disaggregate education data by racial and ethnic categories so that we can see educational disparities and act to improve educational outcomes for impacted students.**

We agree that Race/Ethnicity data can be sensitive information, and we support the ongoing and commonplace methods SDE presently uses to protect student’s individual level data from the public via methods including data suppression and data de-identification. But, when race/ethnicity has such an extreme impact on outcomes for students, it is a disservice to students of color to remove one of the most important tools policymakers, educators, and advocates have to combat the gap in access and achievement for these children.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or need additional information. You can reach me at Chudson@ctvoices.org or (203) 498-4240 x115.

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- ⁱ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2018). *2018 Kids Count Data Book*. Baltimore: The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-2018kidscountdatabook-2018.pdf>
- ⁱⁱ Hudson, C. S. (2018). *The Black-White Education Gap in Connecticut: Indicators of Inequality in Access and Outcomes*. New Haven : Connecticut Voices for Children. Retrieved from [http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/New%20Edits%20-%20NG%20-%20The%20Black-White%20Education%20Gap%20In%20Connecticut%20-%20Indicators%20of%20Inequality%20in%20Access%20and%20Outcomes%20Final%20-%20Copy%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/New%20Edits%20-%20NG%20-%20The%20Black-White%20Education%20Gap%20In%20Connecticut%20-%20Indicators%20of%20Inequality%20in%20Access%20and%20Outcomes%20Final%20-%20Copy%20(1).pdf)
- ⁱⁱⁱ Hudson, C. S. (2018). *The Latino-White Education Gap in Connecticut: Indicators of Inequality in Access and Outcomes*. New Haven: Connecticut Voices for Children. Retrieved from http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/2018_7_25%20Latino%20White%20Disparities%20Report.pdf
- ^{iv} The “top-five” categories are: White, Black or African American, Asian, Native Americans and Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, Two or more races.
- ^v Ramakrishnan, K., & Ahmad, F. Z. (2014). *State of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Series: A Multifaceted Portrait of a Growing Population*. Washington DC: Center for American Progress, AAPI Data. Retrieved from <http://aapidata.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/AAPISReport-comp.pdf>
- ^{vi} Motel, S., & Patten, E. (2012). *Chapter 3: Educational Attainment*. Washington DC: Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/06/27/iii-educational-attainment/>
- ^{vii} United States Census Bureau. (2017). [Connecticut Demographic and Housing Estimates]. *2013-2017 ACS Survey 5-Year Estimates*.
- ^{viii} Megan, K. (2018, September 4). Many Students Displaced by Hurricane Maria Remain in Connecticut Schools. *The Hartford Courant*, p. 1. Retrieved from <https://www.courant.com/education/hc-puerto-rican-refugees-still-in-schools-20180831-story.html>
- ^{ix} White House Initiative on Asian American and Pacific Islanders Interagency Working Group: Data And Research Subcommittee. (2016). *Best Practices for the Disaggregation of Federal Data on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders*. Washington DC: United States White House. Retrieved from <https://sites.ed.gov/aapi/files/2013/03/WHIAAPI-Best-Practices-for-Disaggregation-of-Federal-Data-on-AAPIs.pdf>
- ^x National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention. (2012). The Importance of Disaggregating Student Data (Issue brief). Retrieved from http://www.educationnewyork.com/files/The%20importance%20of%20disaggregating_0.pdf
- ^{xi} American Association of School Administrators. (2002). Using Data to Improve Schools - What's Working(Rep.). Retrieved from http://www.aasa.org/uploadedFiles/Policy_and_Advocacy/files/UsingDataToImproveSchools.pdf
- ^{xii} Darling Hammond, L. (1998). *Unequal Opportunity: Race and Education*(Publication). Retrieved <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/unequal-opportunity-race-and-education/#cancel>
- ^{xiii} Darling Hammond, L. (1998). *Unequal Opportunity: Race and Education*(Publication).