



March 13, 2019

Dear Esteemed Members of the Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Education:

Every child in Connecticut deserves a high-quality education that allows that child to pursue his or her 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.<sup>1</sup> However, not all students in Connecticut experience robust educational opportunities, and this hampers the ability of these students to achieve at their highest potential. 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.<sup>2,3</sup> These disparities act as barriers to success for these students, for their communities, and for the state as a whole.

**State-level disparities in access to quality education for students of color can only be identified and addressed if lawmakers, educators, school officials, and community members have access to data that isolates access and outcomes by student race and ethnicity.**

**The undersigned organizations and individuals oppose S.B. 851: An Act Prohibiting the Disaggregation of Student Data by Ethnic Subgroups in the Public School Information System because this bill would greatly limit the disaggregation of student data by race and ethnicity, making it much harder if not impossible to examine disparities in access to educational opportunities.**

Data disaggregation is a specific type of data analysis where information is broken down to look into smaller subpopulations. In order to examine student data and see disparities in access and outcomes, school districts must first collect data about students' race and ethnicity *and* educational data analysts must be able to examine this data using the tool of data disaggregation. Analysts may disaggregate data by many types of categories: gender, age, disability status, and race/ethnicity are a few common categories for analysis. For some metrics, like Smarter Balanced test scores, Connecticut also disaggregates by student foster care status, homelessness, and military family status—all groups of students that experience unique challenges to accessing a quality education. Aggregated education data, which is not broken up by category, 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 reflect the outcomes of numerically larger groups. In Connecticut's case, aggregate educational data tends to show how White students are doing in school.

Education research commonly acknowledges 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.<sup>4, 5</sup> <sup>6</sup> Policy priorities like reducing suspension and expulsions, improving ELL instruction, and decreasing chronic absenteeism all require that Connecticut be able to examine 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. It could hamper Connecticut's ability to meet the needs of a growing population of students of color in the state.<sup>7</sup> For example, 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.<sup>8</sup> The practice of disaggregating data by ethnicity helps the state to identify the needs of these children and target resources to these children and the schools they attend.

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 educators and policymakers know unequivocally that race and ethnicity are such significant factors in the educational outcomes of our students, it is essential that we preserve the practice of disaggregating education data by racial and ethnic categories.

**Without the ability to use the tool of data disaggregation based on student ethnicity, we may be unable to see educational disparities and thus be unable to act to improve educational outcomes for impacted students. We respectfully ask that you oppose S.B. 851 because it will remove a critical tool for educational equity.**

If you have questions about this letter, please contact Connecticut Voices for Children's Advocacy Director, Dr. Lauren Ruth ([lruth@ctvoices.org](mailto:lruth@ctvoices.org)), Director of Education and Equity, Dr. Wendy Waithe Simmons ([wsimmons@ctvoices.org](mailto:wsimmons@ctvoices.org)), or Associate Policy Fellow Camara Stokes Hudson ([chudson@ctvoices.org](mailto:chudson@ctvoices.org)).

### **Undersigned Organizations**

African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities, Inc. (AFCAMP)  
All Our Kin  
Alliance for Children's Mental Health – Connecticut  
Bridgeport Generation Now  
Center for Children's Advocacy  
Citywide Youth Coalition  
Community Solutions  
Connecticut Association for Human Services  
Connecticut Council for Education Reform (CCER)  
Connecticut Data Collaborative  
Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance  
Connecticut Legal Services  
Connecticut Oral Health Initiative, Inc.  
Connecticut Public Health Association  
Cross St. AME Zion Church  
Early Childhood Collaborative of Southington  
Education Reform Now – Connecticut  
Educators for Excellence – Connecticut  
Friends of Goody Bassett  
Greater Bridgeport NAACP Education Committee

Hamden Anti-Bias Anti-Racism Committee  
Health Equity Solutions  
Hispanic Federation  
Middlesex County NAACP Branch  
Ministerial Health Fellowship  
Moms United in East Haven/Mamas Unidas en East Haven  
National Alliance on Mental Illness - Connecticut  
National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference – Connecticut  
New Haven Legal Assistance  
North Central Regional Mental Health Board  
Northeast Charter School Network  
R Kids Inc.  
Radical Advocates for Cross Cultural Education (R.A.C.C.E)  
Re-Center Race & Equity in Education  
State Education Resource Center  
Students for Educational Justice  
System for Education Equity & Transition LLC  
Teach for America – Connecticut  
YWCA Hartford



**Undersigned Individuals**

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Amy Litke  
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Barbara Scala  
Brittney Cavaliere  
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Catherine Rees  
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Stephanie Luczak, LMSW  
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- <sup>3</sup> 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](http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/2018_7_25%20Latino%20White%20Disparities%20Report.pdf)
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- <sup>6</sup> Darling Hammond, L. (1998). Unequal Opportunity: Race and Education (Publication). Retrieved from: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/unequal-opportunity-race-and-education/#cancel>
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