



Testimony Supporting S.B. 256: An Act Concerning Racial and Ethnic Impact Statements

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Government Administration and Elections Committee
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Senator Flexor, Senator McLachlan, Representative Fox, Representative Devlin, and esteemed members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee,

My name is Karen Siegel, and I am submitting testimony 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 to voice our strong support of S.B. 256.

Connecticut's sluggish economic recovery has been a central topic of discussion for the past two legislative sessions, and the legislature created the Commission on Fiscal Stability and Economic Growth in response to this situation. Emerging evidence suggests both that racial disparities in Connecticut are a cause of this slow economic growth^{1,2,3} and that addressing these disparities could help Connecticut's businesses gain a competitive advantage⁴ and grow our state's economy.⁵ In Connecticut, people of color have become increasingly over-represented in low-wage work and underrepresented in high-wage work over the past five years. Workers of color represent approximately 29 percent of Connecticut's workforce and 50 percent of the state's low-wage workers.⁶ In the same period, wage disparities in Connecticut have widened. The median hourly wage for White workers is \$10 more than for Black workers in Connecticut.⁷ Economic models suggest that the gross domestic product (GDP) of the United States would increase by 14 percent (about \$2 trillion) should the racial wage gap be eliminated.⁸

Disparities in the state are deeply rooted and widespread. Connecticut's children of color experience significant disparities in school achievement, rates of involvement with the justice system, and health care access and outcomes.^{9,10,11} For example, high school graduation rates are 14 percent lower for Black students than for White students in Connecticut.¹² Further, the state's White infants have the lowest mortality rates in the country while our Latino infants have one of the highest.¹³ It is critical to understand how changes to state policies impact communities with needs that are masked in state averages. Historically, racist policies such as redlining heightened racial segregation in Connecticut and widened gaps in opportunity.¹⁴ On the other hand, outreach efforts and changes to our health insurance system have decreased disparities in health insurance coverage between Connecticut's White, Black, and Latino residents.¹⁵

Given this evidence, being able to consider how state policies will impact racial equity will help the General Assembly create policies that expand opportunity for *all* of the families and children in our state and, in so doing, bring our great state back to a place of prosperity.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this written testimony in support of S.B. 256. I can be reached with any questions at ksiegel@ctvoices.org or at 203-498-4240, ext. 120.

¹ Connecticut Voices for Children. (2017) “The State of Working Connecticut.” Retrieved from: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/state-working-connecticut-2017>

² Forthcoming; Masterson, T., Zacharias, A., Rios-Avila, F., & Wolff, E. N. (2017). “The Great Recession and Racial Inequality: Evidence from Measures of Economic Well-Being.” *The Levi Economics Institute of Bard College*.

³ Shapiro, T. (2005) “The Hidden Cost of Being African-American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality.” Oxford University Press.

⁴ Blackwell, A.G., Kramer, M., Vaidyanathan, L., Iyer, L., and Kirschenbaum, J. (2017) “The Competitive Advantage of Racial Equity.” Retrieved from: <https://www.fsg.org/publications/competitive-advantage-racial-equity>

⁵ PolicyLink. (2014) “The Equity Solution: Racial Inclusion is Key to Growing a Strong New Economy.” Retrieved from: http://www.policylink.org/sites/default/files/Equity_Solution_Brief_0.pdf

⁶ Connecticut Voices for Children. (2017) “The State of Working Connecticut.” Retrieved from: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/state-working-connecticut-2017>

⁷ Connecticut Voices for Children. (2017) “The State of Working Connecticut.” Retrieved from: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/state-working-connecticut-2017>

⁸ Blackwell, A.G., Kramer, M., Vaidyanathan, L., Iyer, L., and Kirschenbaum, J. (2017) “The Competitive Advantage of Racial Equity.” Retrieved from: <https://www.fsg.org/publications/competitive-advantage-racial-equity>

⁹ Connecticut Voices for Children. (2018) “The Black-White Education Gap in Connecticut: Indicators of Inequality in Access and Outcomes.” Retrieved from: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/black-white-education-gap-connecticut-indicators-inequality-access-and-outcomes>

¹⁰ Connecticut Voices for Children. (2016) “Persistent Racial Inequality in School Arrest Rates in Connecticut.” Retrieved from: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/persistent-racial-inequality-school-arrest-rates-connecticut>

¹¹ Connecticut Voices for Children. (2018) “Data to Promote Health Equity for Children and Families in Connecticut.” Retrieved from: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/data-promote-health-equity-children-and-families-connecticut>

¹² Connecticut Voices for Children. (2018) “The Black-White Education Gap In Connecticut: Indicators of Inequality in Access and Outcomes.” Retrieved from: <http://www.ctvoices.org/publications/black-white-education-gap-connecticut-indicators-inequality-access-and-outcomes>

¹³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018) “State Variations in Infant Mortality by Race and Hispanic Origin of Mother, 2013-2015.” Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db295.htm>

¹⁴ Connecticut Voices for Children forthcoming brief on racial segregation based on analysis of data from the 2016 American Community Survey.

See also, for example: WNPR. (2016). “What Redlining did to Connecticut’s Impoverished Neighborhoods.” Retrieved from: <http://wnpr.org/post/what-redlining-did-connecticuts-impoverished-neighborhoods>

TrendCT. (2016) “The History of Redlining in Connecticut and the Country.” Retrieved from: <https://trendct.org/2016/10/27/the-history-of-redlining-in-connecticut/>

Open Communities Alliance. (2017). Out of Balance: Subsidized Housing, Segregation and Opportunity in Connecticut. Retrieved from: <http://www.ctoca.org/outofbalance>

¹⁵ Connecticut Voices for Children. (2017) “Reductions in Poverty, Uninsurance at Risk due to New Budget.” Retrieved from: <http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/Census%20brief%20FINAL.pdf>