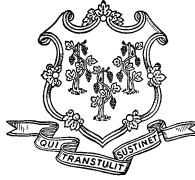


REPRESENTATIVE CHRISTINE PALM
36TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING
ROOM 4100
CAPITOL: (860) 240-8585
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-8267
FAX: (860) 240-0206
E-MAIL: Christine.Palm@cga.ct.gov



State of Connecticut
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

VICE CHAIR
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

DEMOCRATIC LEADER
INTERNSHIP COMMITTEE

MEMBER
JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND
ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

July 23, 2021

Official Statement by Rep. Christine Palm Concerning Reg. 17 and Reg. 4 Schools

Recent developments concerning the two local school districts in the towns I represent are deeply troubling and must be commented on.

Regarding the Reg. 17 Board of Education:

The recent nomination of the three Republican candidates for the local Region 17 Board of Education is cause for grave concern. To be clear: fair representation on boards of ed is best achieved by having citizens of all political party affiliations serve. So, my objection is not to their party *per se*, but to their character and conspiracy theories they espouse. Based on information they have posted on social media, along with objective media accounts, I believe these three individuals are unfit to serve the best interest of our children.

According to their own Facebook accounts, two of these three individuals attended the illegal and profoundly damaging insurrection on Jan. 6 in which an armed crowd attacked the U.S. Capitol, impeded the lawful swearing in of President Biden, attacked uniformed Capitol police officers, threatened the lives of elected officials, defaced our Capitol and, most serious of all, caused several deaths. This insurrection was traitorous and runs counter to everything the U.S. Constitution stands for.

These individuals have also posted troubling support for the debunked “Q Anon” theories, are encouraging parents to defy science by “unmasking” their children, and have implied they will work to make sure teachers do not teach about racism as part of U.S. History classes. Therefore, their adherence to debunked and dangerous theories, along with their admittedly proud participation in the Jan. 6 insurrection leaves no room for doubt that they are unfit to ensure that school policies and procedures reflect the values of the community they serve, in compliance with state and federal laws.

The third individual, owing to public revelations of past criminal charges brought against him for alleged domestic violence, has withdrawn. He is to be commended for doing so. I urge the remaining two candidates to similarly withdraw, for the good of the towns served by Reg. 17. And I encourage the Republican Town Committee to support three new candidates who more accurately espouse public safety, respect for the law, and open-minded, fact-based pedagogy.

Regarding the Reg. 4 schools:

I strongly condemn a petition currently circulating that encourages Reg. 4 parents to sign in protest of the teaching of Critical Race Theory. In the first place, CRT is not a “subject” being taught in our schools. Rather, it is a pedagogical lens through which, when teaching U.S. History, teachers more accurately give the full scope of the lived experiences of people of color.

[CONTINUED]

Contrary to what the petition claims, Critical Race Theory does not teach children to hate America. It does not encourage white students to feel guilty. It does not make Black children feel inferior. What Critical Race Theory *does* do is accurately include the facts of systemic racism in the law (e.g., the racial terrorism of lynching, which is still not a federal crime), economic bias (e.g., Black soldiers returning from war were not entitled to loans under the G.I. Bill) and occasions of violence (e.g., the Tulsa Race Massacre) that are too often whitewashed in many curricula. (These are just a few examples.)

Additionally, the petitioners wrongly say that when the Framers of the Constitution wrote “all men are created equal” they included women and people of color. This kind of ignorance is exactly why the lens of Critical Race Theory should be applied. The “Three-Fifths Clause” in the Constitution deemed enslaved people only 3/5 of a human being and therefore ineligible to vote. (It was repealed with the passage of the 14th Amendment.)

Additionally, women were not allowed to vote until the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920 (and women of color effectively much later). Had the Framers included these groups, as the petitioners wrongly believe, The Civil War would likely not have taken place and there would have been no need for the Suffrage Movement.

This petition is being promulgated by a national group known as Parents Against Critical Theory (PACT), located in Loudoun County, Virginia. Their hateful and ignorant agenda is, unfortunately, being picked up by fringe groups in towns throughout the country, including the towns served by the Region 4 Board of Education.

I urge every parent to deny PACT’s bigoted agenda by refusing to sign. Our children deserve to learn the truth — however painful it may be — about our nation’s history. When we love something, we strive to make it better. Critical Race Theory has value not *despite* our love of country, but precisely *because* of it.

Finally, that is why I was proud to have two of my legislative initiatives (climate change and media literacy/civics) included in a bill that passed both chambers. HB 6619: AN ACT CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A KINDERGARTEN TO EIGHT GRADE MODEL CURRICULUM will make available to school systems (by Jan. 1, 2023) a tool for teaching a more inclusive grade-appropriate curriculum that includes Native American studies, Asian Pacific American studies, LGBTQ studies, climate change, personal financial management and financial literacy, military service and experience of American veterans, and civics and citizenship, including digital citizenship and media literacy.

As these two troubling events in our two school districts prove, the need for media literacy and civics is timely, and dire.

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