

Public Feedback: Bradley Kohl

House File 29: *Social studies standards adoption suspended, and review cycle modified, ethnic studies requirements repealed, and ethnic studies appropriations cancelled.*

I am a retired educator who spent over thirty years working with youth at a top college prep school and in schools for students who were no longer welcome in traditional settings. I am a winner of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching and I have created unique programs and courses, many of which centered on using mathematics as a tool to empower students to advocate for social justice causes important to them. I am also a white gay man, on the autism/Asperger spectrum, and a terminal cancer survivor. My sister is Asian, I occasionally preach a sermon, and I live in Central Minnesota

Why do I say these things? They are all intersecting parts of my identity that I brought to my role as a community member on MDE's Ethnic Studies Working Group. It was not an easy decision. Due to the political climate, accepting that role put my family and me at risk, but we agreed that the risk was worth the good it could bring to students and communities in the state.

I spent countless hours outside of the working group meeting with former students of color and immigrant students, parents, colleagues, university professors, community advocates, jurists, members of the LGBT community, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu believers, people with disabilities, and elders. They taught me much about what ethnic studies should be and built on my own experiences and knowledge as a teacher and individual. Their hopes of an inclusive and uplifting program that welcomed and supportively challenged young people did not align with the narrowly-defined and isolating product a subset of the working group created. Unfortunately, I was unable to support that vision.

These are the key takeaways from those conversations.

1) "Identity Studies" is preferred to "Ethnic Studies" because it is inclusive rather than otherizing. It offers an opportunity for all students to explore their stories and the stories of others. This does not negate a focus on race, but specifically embraces all protected classes and their unique stories as well as the intersectionality between identities. All students should see themselves in the lessons they learn. They should be able to embrace our shared humanity and celebrate the differences that make us so unique and special. All students want to be, and deserve to be, seen and have their stories understood.

2) Any work that is done needs to include proportionate representation from outstate Minnesota. Rural and exurban areas have their own unique circumstances. One question that came up often was, "What does ethnic studies look like when it's taught by white people to white people?" Programs need to represent and reflect local communities. There is a strong desire in outstate areas to learn about these topics, but it needs to be done in a community-sensitive way. Likewise, creating affinity opportunities to connect with peers for young people whose identity may be one of only a few in their local community is a critical lifeline for isolated youth.

3) Programs need to reflect the budgetary and staffing constraints of schools. For example, in many rural schools there is one teacher that teaches all classes in a department. Online courses and other nontraditional approaches will be needed to build out these programs.

4) These programs *are* important. They have the ability to reduce fear, create understanding, and build community. One of my former students, now a teacher, described it as honoring our ancestors without dishonoring other people's ancestors.

Based on that, I have the following recommendations.

- 1) Implement and support the new social studies standards. Track impact through a robust stakeholder feedback mechanism.
- 2) Rescind the "ethnic studies for all" requirement that mandates ethnic studies courses.
- 3) Encourage and support the creation of identity-centered courses across all protected classes.
- 4) Actively pursue curriculum across all disciplines that allows every student to see themselves - their faces, stories and histories - as well as those stories and histories of others. Narratives are complicated and challenging, but students have the ability and desire to explore them in respectful ways. Look for ways to connect rather than divide.
- 5) Include proportionate representation from outstate areas as well as representation from all protected classes in any further work.

I welcome any further discussion.

Respectfully,



Bradley Kohl



February 27, 2023

Education Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
Minnesota Legislature

Sent via email

Dear members of the Education Policy Committee:

We are the Twin Cities Chapter of the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism (FAIR), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing civil rights and liberties for all Americans and promoting a common culture based on fairness, understanding, and humanity. Our website, fairforall.org, can give you a fuller sense of our mission and activities. Thank you for your careful consideration of our thoughts regarding *HF 1502 (Rep. Sencer-Mura) Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement*.

We at FAIR believe that our future depends to a significant degree on our ability to teach our children those nonpartisan habits and values necessary to the proper functioning of a liberal democracy such as ours. This includes a fact-based, balanced, and honest account of our nation's history—both its revolutionary founding promise of freedom and equality, as well as the times we have failed to keep that promise. As we experience declining confidence in our institutions, as we observe illiberal ideas and practices gaining momentum, it is more important than ever to teach the next generation of Minnesotans why America's founding ideals were so essential to the progress we have made, and are so essential to the progress we must still make.

We are very concerned by Minnesota's sudden push for standards and curricula—particularly in the fields of ethnic and social studies—that present only a single, partisan view of American history as well as of various contemporary issues. In its current form, HF 1502 would have Minnesota schools teach a version of ethnic studies that is overtly political in nature; this should concern Minnesotans of all backgrounds and political beliefs. Minnesota is not the first state to be faced with this dilemma. Across the country, many legislatures, departments of education,

school leaders and educators have already decided on the kind of ethnic studies that will be taught in their schools. Here in Minnesota, we still have a choice: should our brand of ethnic studies be inclusive and nonpartisan, or non-inclusive and partisan? The latter, often referred to as “liberated” ethnic studies, is clearly favored by activist groups such as EdLib Minnesota.

The vast majority of Minnesota parents favor an inclusive, non-partisan approach to ethnic studies. This type of education broadens students’ understanding of American history and the important contributions that have been made by people of all ethnic backgrounds. It highlights ethnic groups’ positive impact on the broader society and teaches respect for individuals who, despite discrimination, have led exemplary lives. Inclusive ethnic studies avoids a zero-sum mindset in which gains for one group mean losses for another and rejects the noxious idea that society’s main currency is power and privilege. It also properly rejects the notion that “group identity” should be the primary lens through which history, society, culture, and politics are to be understood. Most significantly, it advances the positive, constructive view that an individual’s personal characteristics — such as character, personality, interests, and talents — contribute substantially to their future purpose and success¹.

In contrast, “liberated” ethnic studies is the product of an activist political movement that is heavily focused on race consciousness and identity politics. This movement appears to be intent on alienating the youth from our institutions and on emphasizing victimization rather than agency. Proponents of liberated ethnic studies dismiss racial progress as a mirage and instead seek to heighten our citizens’ awareness of immutable differences such as race, ethnicity, and gender. This illiberal theory seeks to delegitimize ideas that rest at the core of our American identity: individual merit, tolerance, the rule of law, compromise through reasoned discussion, etc. Despite the fact that these values prevent both anarchy and tyranny, “liberationists” undermine these ideals by claiming that they exist only to maintain various kinds of “unearned privilege”. Worse, these same people actively seek to turn our children into activists who, they hope, will radically transform their schools, their communities, and their nation².

HF1502 defines “Ethnic Studies” as follows:

“... the critical and interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity with a focus on the experiences and perspectives of people of color within and beyond the United States. Ethnic studies analyzes the ways in which race and racism have been and continue to be powerful social, cultural, and political forces, and the connection of race to other groups of stratification, including gender, class, sexuality, religion, and legal status.”³

¹ Honig, B (2022). Schools Should Opt for Inclusive Ethnic Studies. Edsource.org.

² Ibid.

³ A bill for an act creating an ethnic studies requirement, Minnesota Statutes 2022, section 120B.025, Subd. 1.

The proposed model curriculum framework, focused on power dynamics and intersectionality, is replete with the “liberated” version of ethnic studies. For example:

- “(a) The model curriculum must:
- (2) include a **power, race, class, and gender analysis** as part of the course via literature, discussion, classwork, and homework as the analysis relates to ethnic studies courses; and
 - (3) include an **intersectional analysis** of climate, health, food, housing, education, and policy.
- (b) The model ethnic studies curriculum must include the following topics:
- (1) Latinx studies;
 - (2) African American studies;
 - (3) Asian American studies;
 - (4) Indigenous or First Nation studies; or
 - (5) introduction to ethnic studies.”⁴

FAIR Twin Cities strongly encourages the Education Policy Committee and the Minnesota State Legislature to take a pause. We ask you to carefully assess whether, considering the burden of current graduation requirements as well as the strain that a new course mandate would place on many schools, HF1502 is even necessary. In any case, do not rush into adopting HF1502 and an ethnic studies graduation requirement for Minnesota’s school children. Finally, if ethnic studies must be taught in Minnesota, it should be inclusive and nonpartisan, rather than the “liberated” and politicized version.

Sincerely,



Jeff Campbell
Chapter Leader
FAIR Twin Cities

⁴ Ibid, Subd. 6(a)-(b)

-Due to time constraints I will only be orally delivering part of this document-

Thank you Rep. Bennett and Rep Mueller and all of the honorable members of the Education Policy Committee.

I would be remiss if I didn't say Go Hornet Hockey!

My name is Claude Sigmund. I have been teaching since 1996 but have spent the last 26 years teaching 9-12th grade in Edina. For a large part of my career I have been very involved in teaching standards and even worked briefly on the 2011 standards.

When reviewing the proposed 2021 standards, I for one was happy to see the inclusion of diversity and ethnicity. As teachers, we have to update our teaching practices often to adjust to current research and best practices.

The 2021 standards embrace the most current research by incorporating ethnic studies. Research shows that students who participate in ethnic studies courses typically experience:

- Improved academic performance across all subjects 1, 2
- Higher graduation rates, particularly among students from diverse backgrounds 2,3,4
- Increased critical thinking skills through exposure to multiple historical perspectives 2,3,4
- Enhanced engagement with course material due to its relevance to their lived experiences 1,2,3

The argument against inclusion of ethnic studies are looking at a title and not what ethnic studies actually is. So, let's really examine what is good social studies and how do these standards help our students.

Good history means knowing the good and the bad. Recognizing the gray areas and discussing the role of all groups including, men, women, african americans, native americans etc.

For example, we often love to tell the story of the rebellious Bostonians throwing tea off the Elenor, the Beaver and the Dartmouth. We often say that Sam Adams and his cronies dressed as "Indians", in loincloths and feather head dresses. And while this was a great event in US history, not completely accurate.

1 Student success soars after ethnic studies, new research finds

<https://firstfocus.org/news/student-success-soars-after-ethnic-studies-new-research-finds/#:~:text=Evidence%20suggests%20that%20ethnic%20studies,outsized%20impact%20on%20math%20scores.>

2 Ninthgrade Ethnic Studies Helped Students for years.

<https://news.stanford.edu/stories/2021/09/research-finds-sustained-impact-ethnic-studies-class>

3 The Advantage of Ethnic Studies Courses

<https://www.bestcolleges.com/humanities/advantages-of-ethnic-studies-courses/>

4 Ethnic studies increases longer-run academic engagement and attainment

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8449416/>

First no one dressed in lincloths - the tea party took place on Dec 16 1773. I don't know about you but I'm not wearing a lincloth in Boston in december.

Second, no one thought the bostonians were actually natives. Why? Isn't that the question? Where did the natives go? What happened to them?

So who did participate? The vast majority were of English descent, but men of Irish, Scottish, French, Portuguese, and African ancestry were documented to have also participated. So why did people other than those of English descent participate? Where were the women?

What did the English have to say about the Boston Tea party?

These are the questions of ethnic studies and its impact on history.

We need to know the glory of D-Day and celebrate that. But we also need to know about Japanese internment camps. The massive benefit of the Navajo code talkers and the history of reservations. Yes, we need to identify the pain of our past and racist actions from redlining to lynchings. This is what incorporating ethnicity into history actually means. Seeing the multiple perspectives and how people of different ethnicities were impacted and involved.

The following is a quote often attributed to British statesman Winston Churchill. However, the quote is more likely attributed to Spanish philosopher George Santayana.

“Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it”
How do we not repeat history if we don't actually learn the history?

Removing the ethnic studies standard is like teaching only half the history.

Lastly, research states learning about the fellow citizens of our school, our state and our country can only lead to positive outcomes.

- Schools with robust ethnic studies programs report better school climate metrics
 - Less fights
 - Less vandalism
 - etc.
- Reduced achievement gaps between different demographic groups.

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- Kids see themselves in the curriculum and thus their curiosity is peaked.
- Enhanced student engagement and participation in school activities. Such as...
 - Sports
 - Theater
 - Music
 - Clubs

Thank you for granting me the time to present.

Mr. Claude Sigmund

1 Student success soars after ethnic studies, new research finds

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House Education Policy Committee

Chair: Rep Peggy Bennet

Vice Chair: Rep Patricia Mueller

Tuesday, February 18th

Re: HF29: Social Studies standards adoption suspended and review cycle modified, ethnic studies requirements repealed, and ethnic studies appropriations canceled.

My name is Courtney Major and I have been teaching social studies at the middle and high school levels in MN for 23 years. I have participated in providing feedback for and subsequently implemented both the 2012 and 2021 revisions of the state social studies standards. In 2021, I was asked by the Education Department at the Minnesota Historical Society to prepare teacher professional development for the National Council of the Social Studies annual meeting entitled "Minnesota's Ethnic and Cultural Diversity: Past and Present." I am currently a proud member of the Social Studies Department at Edina High School.

I am here today to testify against HF29 and am in favor of keeping the ethnic studies strand embedded in the Minnesota Social Studies standards.

Representation matters. The ethnic studies strand in the Social Studies aims to ensure that the history of ALL OF US is included in MN K-12 social studies curriculum. Ethnic Studies emphasizing the actions of people from ALL ethnicities who refused to be excluded from the promises of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Representation matters. ALL Minnesota students, whether their immigrant history past or in the more recent present, deserve the opportunity to see "someone who looks like them" participate in civic life and celebrate the contributions of people whose efforts compel us to live up to the promises of freedom and the ideals enshrined in our Constitution to create "a more perfect union."

The ethnic studies strand requires students to acknowledge ALL PARTS of the past in order to best navigate their present — and their futures. Minnesota students will be better positioned to enter an increasingly competitive workplace where they will need to navigate the nuances of race, class and gender in order to collaborate effectively with others to find complex solutions to unpredictable problems.

Novelist George Orwell observed in his masterpiece 1984, "Who controls the past, controls the future. Who controls the past, controls the present."

The truth is, our nation's past is complicated and sometimes contradictory. Removing the ethnic studies strand from the current social studies standards intentionally revokes opportunities for our students to fully examine the whole truth about who we are, and implies that the history of some Minnesotans is more important than others.

By denying access to the truth about the past in this present moment, we are not adequately preparing Minnesotans for the realities of the future. By striking the ethnic studies strand from the current state standards and revoking institutional financial support, this committee would be complicit in hiding the truth from Minnesota students.

Respectfully submitted,

Courtney Major, M.E.D.



Minnesota Parents Alliance
RECLAIMING OUR SCHOOLS

February 18, 2025

RE: HF 29

Dear Members of the Education Policy Committee,

My name is Cristine Trooien, and I am the Executive Director of Minnesota Parents Alliance, a grassroots organization with a mission of educating and empowering Minnesota parents to be strong advocates for academic achievement, equality and parental rights. I am writing today to underscore the importance of the decision before you with regard to recommitting to liberated ethnic studies (LES) in Minnesota K-12.

At present, every member of this committee is fully aware of exactly what LES is, how it differs from more appropriate and constructive forms of teaching history and civics in a pluralistic setting, the overt ideological bias of the groups and individuals who have been appointed to create the framework and implementation of LES in Minnesota K-12, and the array of arguments that have been presented by multiethnic coalitions not only across Minnesota, but nationally, against its divisive content.

For months this body has been confronted with countless pleas from administrators, school board members, educators and Minnesotans of all backgrounds and beliefs for relief from the burdensome mandates forced on K-12 districts during the last biennium. The recently released NAEP scores and the 2024 MCA test scores corroborate the urgent need to aim every moment of teaching time and every penny in local budgets at improving student achievement in core subjects. As you know, LES forces Minnesota school districts to redirect those vital resources toward instilling an offensive, anti-American, anti-Semitic, regressive and narrow ideological view of history that requires students to divide themselves into oppressors and victims and engage in radical social activism.

There is no question that mandating LES was a significant misstep for Minnesota. Today the question before you is: ***are you willing to double down and do it again?***

I urge you to give careful and courageous consideration to the role you play in the direction of Minnesota's K-12 education system with your vote on HF 29.

Thank you for your commitment and service,

Sincerely,

Cristine Trooien



February 15, 2025

Dear Members of the Minnesota State Legislature,

We, as members of Education for Liberation Minnesota, strongly encourage you to reject House File 29 and future bills that attempt to dismantle the holistic and honest teaching of social studies and other disciplines in Minnesota schools. The social studies standards and subsequent bill to require Minnesota children have access to Ethnic Studies were created through democratic processes that included:

- The sustained work of experts in the field of social studies, curriculum development, and equitable education
- Processes of public review and public comment
- Legislative committee review and House votes

These standards and requirements were not created out of thin air by a small special interest group. The standards and requirements represent the culmination of advocacy by communities of color and Indigenous communities in Minnesota over a period of decades. Ethnic Studies has existed as a field of study in higher education for over fifty years. Nearly every college in Minnesota offers coursework in Ethnic Studies disciplines. Not preparing Minnesota children for education beyond K-12 is a form of educational malpractice.

We want to be clear that the persistent resistance and attacks on Ethnic Studies is an ideological attempt to miseducate Minnesota youth based on a narrow analysis of history that erases the experiences of Indigenous communities and communities of color. The purpose of education in Minnesota should be to provide students with skills, perspectives, and the ability to critically analyze information, formulate arguments, and act in ethical ways. By hiding information from students about the problems of the country we do them a disservice by limiting their ability to understand how communities have attempted to address discrimination, land dispossession, and labor exploitation.

Today in Minnesota, there exists racial disparity in nearly every social indicator of well-being, including income, employment, home ownership, access to healthcare, maternal mortality, graduation rates, incarceration rates, and child poverty. Ethnic Studies is best equipped to help students understand how these inequalities came into being and what we can do to eliminate them. By retracting the small amount of progress made in the past four years, we not only increase harm to children in Minnesota, we effectively require teachers to lie to students by ignoring the realities in which they exist. We urge you not to make this mistake.

There are plenty of opportunities for Minnesota students to feel proud about their state and country. To pretend that young people are too fragile to grapple with the actual complexities of trying to build an equitable society is misguided. The attempt to restrict Ethnic Studies in Minnesota schools is an attempt to lower expectations for what Minnesota students can accomplish. Please vote against House File 29.

Sincerely,

Education for Liberation Minnesota Organizing Committee:

Ali Alowonle

Brian Lozenski

Jonathan Hamilton

Lisa Fralish

Marika Pfefferkorn

Natalia Benjamin

Nathaniel Perez

Ro Lin

Rose Brewer



February 17, 2025

Dear Chair Bennett and Members of the Minnesota House Education Policy Committee:

I am writing to express Jewish Community Action's strong opposition to HF29, which would remove ethnic studies as an academic standard for Minnesota students and remove \$1,000,000 in funding to Minnesota schools. Most importantly, this bill would deny Minnesota students a complete and accurate education. Removing ethnic studies prioritizes exclusion over education.

Jewish Community Action is the Jewish voice in Minnesota's movement for economic, racial and social justice. We have been organizing for equity and justice since our founding in 1995, recognizing that the Jewish community's ability to live, work, learn and thrive in Minnesota is only possible if every marginalized community in Minnesota has the same rights, privileges and opportunities. The currently legislated integrated ethnic studies curriculum will help prepare Minnesota students to live in an increasingly multiracial, multifaith state and country, and create a more connected and competent citizenry.

HF29 sets Minnesota students back. It ignores community wishes, puts funding at risk, and prioritizes division and exclusion over education. On behalf of Jewish Community Action's 5,500 members and stakeholders, we insist that you reject HF29 and support Minnesota students and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Beth Gendler", is written over a horizontal line.

Beth Gendler

Executive Director

beth@jewishcommunityaction.org

651-699-6742

Testimony in Opposition to HF 29 at 2-18-25 House Education Committee

Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

My name is Betty Greene. I am a community member and former school psychologist. I am writing in opposition to HF 29.

It is important for every student to succeed in school. Many students do not hear or see their stories, history, and culture in the school curriculum, and it can be hard for them to stay engaged with schoolwork that does not feel relevant to them and/or actively excludes their history. At past education committee hearings, I heard many students say that an ethnic studies class was the first time they saw themselves represented and it made a huge difference in their school success.

HF29 undermines the Minnesota education system by prioritizing exclusion over education. It denies students a complete education and defunds critical programs that ensure our schools reflect the rich perspectives of our communities. HF29 is a deliberate attempt to roll back progress and erase history.

I ask you to protect funding for Ethnic Studies and maintain Ethnic Studies as an academic standard and allow it to count toward graduation requirements. Every student deserves a full and honest education that prepares them for the future. Ethnic studies classes can enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which help prepare all students for the real world.

Please reject HF29. Our economy and our society as a whole need everyone to succeed.

Written testimony on HF 29

Good afternoon, my name is Mark Gilson. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of HF 29 and its effort to remove or repeal certain statutory provisions concerning social studies and related content requirements.

Education remains the cornerstone of our republic. It is imperative that any statewide curriculum, particularly in a subject as formative as social studies, be grounded in sound scholarship rather than guided by fleeting ideological trends. The language we seek to repeal—specifically the statutory definition of “Ethnic studies” as an interdisciplinary study of race and ethnicity, coupled with sweeping pronouncements about the social, cultural, and political forces of race—underscores the risk of embedding a singular worldview into our K-12 system. While it is beneficial for students to learn diverse perspectives, those perspectives must be framed within the rigor and balance characteristic of mainstream academic inquiry.

Undergraduate and graduate students in the discipline of history, for instance, engage in a carefully honed methodology: they critically analyze source materials, contextualize historical events, and apply interpretive skills grounded in verifiable evidence. It is thus crucial that K-12 standards be similarly anchored in well-established scholarship. By contrast, prescriptive language emphasizing “race and racism” as overarching explanatory forces, or mandating that “ethnic studies” encompass inherently political definitions of oppression, risks displacing the more measured process of historical inquiry. School districts and educators could feel compelled to endorse a particular sociopolitical perspective rather than teach history, civics, and related subjects through an impartial lens of fact, chronology, and evidence-based analysis.

HF 29 prudently acknowledges that our social studies curriculum must foster critical thinkers, not ideological adherents. Our schools should impart the knowledge and skills that enable students to analyze complex social and historical phenomena from multiple angles—rather than presupposing unanimity on contentious issues. By limiting language that elevates certain viewpoints to the level of binding statutory definitions, HF 29 safeguards space for genuine academic discourse.

In summary, I support HF 29 because it ensures that Minnesota’s K-12 social studies standards—and the instructional materials developed to satisfy them—remain faithful to their core mission of cultivating well-informed citizens. We can and should reflect the rich tapestry of American life without descending into politicized mandates that conflate certain theoretical frameworks with objective truth. I am grateful to the sponsors for advancing this legislation, and I encourage its enactment.

Thank you for your attention and the opportunity to testify on this critical matter.

17 February 2025

Dear Member of Minnesota Legislature,

Activists in Minnesota have attempted to subvert the field of history and social studies, replacing it with a dogmatic ethnic studies framework that fuels division and does not address student achievement. We urge you not to replace history and social studies standards with an ideologically driven lens that has proven harmful in multiple other states.

In California districts are facing civil rights investigations and [lawsuits](#) over the weaponization of the newly adopted ethnic studies mandate. The graduation requirement has so far proven to be more trouble than it's worth, with students being targeted with virulent antisemitism. In some instances, [historically inaccurate materials](#) are making their way into the classroom, denying students access to quality education. Unfortunately, many activist organizations are stoking the flames of hate, rather than centering care for students. Our children deserve learning environments where they are exposed to the diverse plurality of the nation and world in which we all live. Ethnic studies accomplishes the opposite, contributing to prejudice and stereotyping.

History and social studies provide K-12 students opportunities to learn about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, while engaging in the experiences of those who came before. Watering down curricula about the giants who built our nation in favor of ideology that divides people into the oppressor/oppressed binary does a disservice to all students. Ethnic Studies is not the study of ethnic groups, but instead a discipline that focuses on perceptions of power and privilege. Ultimately, we must ask ourselves, would we rather our children learn about Frederick Douglass or Ibram X. Kendi.

Even as parents, students, and educators speak out against the divisiveness in our schools, we have been struck by the resounding silence of some policy makers and the outright complicity of others. Given the recently released NAEP scores, it is obvious that our children need access to a quality education. As voters, constituents, and, more importantly, parents, we are more than happy to speak with you and engage in dialogue. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Brandy Shufutinsky, EdD
Director of Education & Community Engagement
brandy@navivalues.org

- [Santa Ana School District Sued for Allegedly Creating Antisemitic Classes](#)
- [Ethnic Studies Lesson on Israel-Palestine Conflict Sparks Controversy](#)

RACE: HOW DO YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?

2025 Minnesota Student Survey

Surveys teach. Youth are presented with thirty-seven (37) identities, mostly geographic, excluding Europe ... or “white.”

3. ... (Mark ALL that apply) a. American Indian or Alaskan Native b. Asian, South Asian, or Asian American c. Black, African, or African American d. Hispanic or Latino/Latina e. Middle Eastern or North African f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander g. White

4. If you are **American Indian or Alaskan Native**, which group best describes you? (... mark ALL that apply) a. Anishinaabe/Ojibwe b. Dakota/Lakota c. Other tribal affiliation

5. If you are **Asian, South Asian, or Asian American**, which group best describes you? (... mark ALL that apply) a. Bangladeshi b. Burmese c. Chinese d. Filipino e. Hmong f. Indian g. Karen h. Korean i. Lao j. Nepali k. Pakistani l. Vietnamese m. Other Asian

6. If you are **Black, African, or African American**, which group best describes you? (... mark ALL that apply) a. African American b. Ethiopian – Oromo c. Ethiopian – other d. Liberian e. Nigerian f. Somali g. Other Black, African, or African American

7. If you are **Hispanic or Latino/Latina**, which group best describes you? (... mark ALL that apply) a. Colombian b. Ecuadoran c. Guatemalan d. Mexican e. Puerto Rican f. Salvadoran g. Spanish/Spanish-American h. Other Hispanic or Latino/Latina

8. If you are **Middle Eastern or North African**, which group best describes you? (... mark ALL that apply) a. Egyptian b. Iranian c. Iraqi d. Lebanese e. Palestinian f. Other Middle Eastern or North African

... or White ?

Testimony In Support of HF 29 Suspending Social Studies Standards

Before the Minnesota House Education Policy Committee

February 18, 2025

By Michael E. McCarthy, Chair

Fixing Stillwater Schools

Support for HF 29

I am here today to speak in favor of HF 29 for its common sense pause and assessment so we can consider the importance of equality over equity, merit over DEI, and academics over indoctrination.

We live in a time and place where those who have had the power embedded an insidious worldview throughout our schools. A social political movement that believed a better world required a “fundamentally changed America”. And they are sowing the seeds of that new vision in the open minds and hearts of little children before they can reach the age of reason.

While half of Minnesota’s students cannot read or do math at grade level -- teachers attend professional development courses to learn how to better instill divisive racial beliefs and to promote LGBTQIA dogma in the guise of “cultural awareness”.

We are here today not so much to discuss political differences, but two opposing sets of worldviews, cultures and values.

The traditional worldview of western civilization is grounded in objective reality where there is such a thing as “truth” to be pursued through questioning, making observations, and the application of deductive reasoning to reach a logical conclusion. Through this process people concluded for thousands of years that we are all human beings, men and women.

In the opposing “progressive” worldview, everyone has “my truth” and “your truth” based on their feelings. This worldview divides us into as many categories of humans by race and gender as suits their wants – especially their wanting to divide us into combating groups of self-declared victims and those they accuse of being “privileged” oppressors.

The Education Standards Have a False Premise

The underlying premise of the education standards that HF 29 sets aside is flawed.

In the progressive oppressor/oppressed worldview the world is divided into an unlimited number of victim groups. One may self-identify as being part of one or more. In doing so, self-declared victims gain opportunity, voice, resources and power over others accused of having “privilege” and the right to take retribution against those so accused. This process requires the redistribution of opportunity, voice, resources and power from those accused of privilege to those claiming victimhood. In practice, the taking from those less politically favored and the giving to those more

politically favored. In this process, “diversity, equity, and inclusion” substitute for merit. The goal of this reallocation is “social justice” as judged by those reaping the benefits of this process.

With regards to the delicately and deceptively named “ethnic studies” this is the teaching that all other races are owed opportunity, voice, resources and power over others for having been oppressed by “whites” or their ancestors. People of European heritage having light skin completions (“Whites”) are expected to surrender what is demanded of them to be good “allies” to the oppressed classes.

This social model is not only wrong, but its application in school is detrimental to the mental health, development and future wellbeing of our children.

Radical Racial Ideology Is Embedded Everywhere

This dangerous ideology is embedded in every subject, in every grade.

It is even embedded in the Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) given every 3 years to students in the 5th, 8th, 9th and 11 grades. *As a “teaching” tool, this survey reinforces and normalizes aspects of oppressor/oppressed racism.*

In the MSS, each student is asked for their racial identity (Questions 3-8) but notice how they are asked.

In the Minnesota Educational world of progressive racial identity politics everyone is either a “white” privileged oppressor or an oppressed victim of another racial identity. In this worldview, all the non-white children are deserving of more resources, voice, and opportunity to make up for their racial oppression and that of their ancestors at the hands of “whites”. The “white” students are expected to willingly surrender what is asked of them to be good “allies.” This is “equity” or social justice.

Hence, in the survey your child may identify as non-white in one of 6 major categories of geographically based “race” and then from thirty-seven (37) more geographically based, non-white racial victim categories. [Note the Minnesota State Survey attachment.]

In the alternative, each child is presented with the option to self-identify by skin tone as “white” – that is, as “white privileged”. Note: this category is not geographically based as the others, not “European” but skin tone-based stripping away all meritorious consideration of associations with western civilization. There are ZERO subcategories for Irish, British, German, French, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, Swiss, Russian, Hungarian, Italian, New Zealander, Australian, et cetera. No, just that pesky, privileged ... “White.”

Where Does This Lead?

In Stillwater Area Schools (ISD 834) this leads to the dystopian “Identity-Harm Protocols” adopted at its December 17th 2024, School Board meeting.

1. These administrative measures kick in if anyone with a PROTECTED identity FEELS that someone else has besmirched one of their identities.
2. Witnesses must report the affront or risk being held accountable (protocols apply to classmates, teachers, janitors, bus drivers, et cetera). Everyone spies on everyone, students and staff alike.
3. An investigation will take place.
4. There will be a “public denouncement”.
5. The offending child’s school record will mark them as a social non-conforming dissident.
6. Finally, counselors will re-educate the child to conform their thoughts to the school’s oppressor/oppressed worldview, culture and values.

Imagine second grade Jonney telling Mary on the playground that nobody should get anything different because of their skin color! The weight of “the system” will land on his little shoulders.

Those who do not “affirm” and conform to the progressive dogma will be accused of “harming” those who do embrace those beliefs. Advocates assert that a “safe” school is one where progressives “feel” affirmed. Otherwise, they will “feel unsafe”. Everyone and everything must adjust to accommodate the progressive world view or school will “feel unsafe.” Safety requires conformity and enforcement

It is understood that in in the progressive worldview self-declared victims may “feel unsafe” in the presence of others having different cultures, worldviews or values. Therefore, proponents assert that school “safety” requires everyone, and everything, to conform their words, actions, and thoughts to be of the culture, worldview and values prescribed.

Safety from exposure to a different worldview, culture, or values requires conformity and its enforcement. The proposed Identity-Harm Protocols are the enforcement.

This closely mirrors the methods of the Maoist “cultural revolution” in China.

What needs to be done

Start here with HF 29. Shine light on this dangerous dogma to alert parents what is being done to their children! Start now.

The legislature must now create a means for well-developed and documented input from those who believe the privileged/victim-identity group social model not only to be wrong, but harmful.

The Department of Education cannot claim to have considered public input without including those who oppose having their children taught that they live in a systemically white privileged world where BIPOC children should be treated differently and where allies assert “binary heteronormality” is an evil to be abolished. Community members believing that we are all humans, male and female, and deserving of equal treatment must not be marginalized and have our children taught beliefs contrary to their parents and faith community.

All education standards that rely on the oppressor-oppressed worldview and its underlying assumptions must be suspended and subjected to full public engagement.

HF 29 – Support - Bauer

My husband and I oppose the ethnic studies requirements in Minnesota schools.

We need to focus on LITERACY and math improvements for starters.

We agree with the amendments to remove ethnic studies.

Thank you,

Zac and Kim Bauer

Apple Valley, MN

Written Testimony of Jessica Dressely
18365 Goodwin Avenue, Hastings, MN 55033
In Support of H.F. No. 29
Submitted to the Minnesota House Committee on Education Policy

February 18, 2025

Dear Chair and Members of the MN House Committee on Education Policy,

I am writing to express my strong support for HF29. As a parent, I believe that repealing Ethnic Studies requirements from the K-12 social studies standards is a necessary step to refocus education on academic excellence, historical accuracy, and civic unity. While it is important to teach history comprehensively, embedding Ethnic Studies as a standalone requirement or as a mandated component of social studies creates several challenges that ultimately undermine educational goals.

Ethnic Studies, as implemented in many curricula, often prioritizes ideological frameworks over objective historical inquiry. Social studies should be dedicated to teaching verifiable historical facts, civics, geography, and economics that ensure students develop critical thinking skills rather than being encouraged to adopt a particular political perspective. By realigning Ethnic Studies from standards, schools can maintain academic integrity and ensure that students receive a fact-based education rather than one rooted in activism.

A well-structured social studies curriculum naturally includes the experiences and contributions of different ethnic and cultural groups. U.S. history, world history, and government courses already cover civil rights movements, immigration, and diverse cultural influences. Ethnic Studies as a separate requirement is redundant and unnecessary, adding additional mandates that do not improve student outcomes.

One of the primary risks of Ethnic Studies courses is that they often emphasize differences rather than shared civic values. Many Ethnic Studies programs present history through a lens of oppression and grievance rather than focusing on the progress and unity that have shaped societies over time. Removing Ethnic Studies requirements helps prevent the division of students into identity groups and instead promotes a common understanding of history based on shared principles of democracy, liberty, and individual

rights.

Education should reflect the values and priorities of local communities, not be dictated by ideologically driven mandates. Many parents and educators have raised concerns that Ethnic Studies courses introduce controversial material that does not align with their values or expectations for education. Repealing Ethnic Studies requirements from social studies standards restores local control, ensuring that families have a say in what their children are learning.

With declining proficiency in core subjects such as reading, math, and civics, schools should focus on improving fundamental skills that directly impact students' future success. The addition of Ethnic Studies requirements takes time and resources away from essential subjects. Rather than adding coursework that does not contribute to academic achievement, schools should prioritize high-quality education that prepares students for higher education, careers, and informed citizenship.

In conclusion, repealing Ethnic Studies requirements from social studies standards is a step toward restoring academic excellence, preventing division, and ensuring that education remains focused on knowledge rather than ideology. Social studies should continue to provide a broad and balanced view of history, but it should not be politicized or turned into a platform for social activism. Schools must prioritize rigorous, fact-based learning that unites students under shared civic values and prepares them for future success.

I urge the committee to pass HF29 and repeal divisive Ethnic Studies requirements from Minnesota K-12 social studies standards. Please get back to the primary goal of education and provide students with a well rounded, fact-based understanding of history, civics, and economics. Thank you for reading my thoughts on HF29.

Sincerely,

Jessica Dressely

Testimony in Opposition to HF 29

Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

My name is Betty Greene. I am a community member and former school psychologist. I am writing in opposition to HF 29.

It is important for every student to succeed in school. Many students do not hear or see their stories, history, and culture in the school curriculum, and it can be hard for them to stay engaged with schoolwork that does not feel relevant to them and/or actively excludes their history. At past education committee hearings, I heard many students say that an ethnic studies class was the first time they saw themselves represented and it made a huge difference in their school success.

HF29 undermines the Minnesota education system by prioritizing exclusion over education. It denies students a complete education and defunds critical programs that ensure our schools reflect the rich perspectives of our communities. HF29 is a deliberate attempt to roll back progress and erase history.

I ask you to protect funding for Ethnic Studies and maintain Ethnic Studies as an academic standard and allow it to count toward graduation requirements. Every student deserves a full and honest education that prepares them for the future. Ethnic Studies classes can enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which help prepare all students for the real world.

Please reject HF29. Our economy and our society as a whole need everyone to succeed.

My name is Elizabeth Hanke, and I'm a constituent from Mankato, MN.

I am writing in reference to House File 29 to express my concerns about Liberated Ethnic Studies. These programs not only risk hindering academic achievement and worsening race relations among students but also impose additional financial burdens on our education system. I urge you to consider repealing them.

These programs operate on the assumption that students can only succeed if their teachers share their racial or cultural background. This mindset sells students short, failing to prepare them for a world where they must collaborate with people of all backgrounds. Rather than lowering expectations under the guise of "liberation," we should empower students to meet high standards. Lowering the bar doesn't help—it hinders. It creates the illusion of success while leaving students unprepared for the challenges they will face in higher education and the workforce.

The impact of these policies isn't theoretical. In Mankato, I raised concerns about a curriculum that labeled phrases like "one human race" as covert white supremacy. My initial request wasn't to ban the curriculum or censor ideas but simply to include another perspective, like a video from Glenn Loury. Yet, my appeal was dismissed. This shows the rigidity of these frameworks—they allow no room for dissenting viewpoints, even when raised respectfully.

Meanwhile, I watched a father speak at a school board meeting in 2024 about his daughter being teased for wearing braids similar to dreadlocks. To defend her, he pointed out that Vikings also wore dreadlocks—a historical fact that complicates simplistic narratives about cultural ownership. Yet, instead of fostering curiosity and nuanced conversations, the current approach encourages students to see each other as stereotypes, not individuals.

Liberated Ethnic Studies claim to promote understanding but end up promoting division by enforcing ideological conformity. They teach students to see themselves and their peers as permanent oppressors or victims based solely on appearance. This worldview undermines accountability and fosters resentment.

I believe that students of all backgrounds are capable of excellence, and teachers are capable of inspiring that excellence without ideological mandates. We should champion rigorous standards, critical thinking, and genuine dialogue—values that unite rather than divide.

Moreover, implementing Liberated Ethnic Studies introduces additional costs into an already resource-constrained education system. We should focus on policies that directly enhance student outcomes rather than diverting funds to unproven programs. [This is particularly pressing given that, in 2024, only 49.9% of Minnesota students were proficient in reading—a significant decline from 55% in 2019.](#)

Redirecting our energy and resources toward evidence-based strategies that elevate educational excellence is imperative to reverse these troubling trends.

I urge you to repeal Liberated Ethnic Studies and replace them with educational standards that prepare students for the real world.

Subject: Support for House File 29 – Repeal of Liberated Ethnic Studies

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

My name is Shelley Kent, and I am a constituent from Andover, Minnesota. I strongly urge you to support House File 29 to repeal Liberated Ethnic Studies (LES), which fosters division, undermines academic excellence, and exposes our schools to serious legal risks. Policies like this are exactly why I have chosen to homeschool my children—because Minnesota’s education system is increasingly prioritizing ideology over quality education.

Legal cases such as *Deemar v. Evanston/Skokie SD 65* and the Santa Ana Unified School District lawsuit highlight the dangers of race-based policies in education. These cases involved racial segregation, lowered academic standards, and ideological indoctrination—resulting in civil rights violations and lawsuits. If LES is implemented statewide, Minnesota schools will face similar legal challenges, financial burdens, and community division.

I have already seen firsthand how these ideas are being pushed in schools. The professional development training in my district promotes race essentialism, instructing teachers to categorize students based on racial identity rather than as individuals. Disturbingly, the person responsible for designing this training is also on the committee overseeing LES implementation statewide. This means the same divisive ideas that contributed to my decision to homeschool could soon be forced into every school in Minnesota.

This approach does not create an inclusive learning environment—it reinforces harmful stereotypes and discourages critical thinking. Education should focus on academic excellence and equal treatment, not ideological frameworks that undermine fairness. Please support House File 29 to protect Minnesota’s schools from legal challenges and ensure a rigorous, fair education for all students.

Thank you,

Shelley Kent

Andover, MN

Written Testimony in support of HF 29 – February 17th, 2025

Madam Chair and Members of the Education Policy Committee,

Thank you for considering my comments in support of removing the Ethnic Studies component.

My name is Karin Miller. I am a wife, mother of six, teacher, and author of Faith in Action Substack from Dakota County. Even though I currently am home educating my children, I chose to speak out because I care about the entire generation my children are growing up with. Together, they are the future of America.

In 2023, I testified in opposition to the Ethnic Studies requirement of HF 1269 (lines 11.4-11.10 and 11.29-12.12) because it would be taught through a lens of critical race theory. It teaches race and racism as a political force, along with other areas of stratification such as gender identity.

This is in essence the teaching of cultural Marxism which will only further divide our children and our society based on immutable characteristics and pit us against one another.

Surely we do not want to implement an ethnic studies standard that teaches our students that they are forever trapped by their skin color to be inherently an oppressor or forever the oppressed.

Let us teach them the truth – that each one of us is descended from one human race, just with differing levels of melanin. That despite our external differences and our past histories, we all have the same potential on the inside to either become a noble instrument of what is just and good, or to become a cruel instrument of evil and vice.

This is the heritage of every young American! – That we can stand shoulder to shoulder – like the white person who realized that slavery was wrong and the person of color who longed to be free.

Together we can overcome the injustice of racial bias to claim the birthright of EVERY American – that ALL are created equal and given the Rights of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness!

Teaching ethnic studies through a lens of critical race theory will only deepen the divisions between us and enslave us all. Let us therefore choose to link arms and break free!

Thank you for voting in favor of HF 29.

I am writing to you for the purpose of expressing my wholehearted, enthusiastic support and agreement with opinions being expressed by testifiers Kendall Qualls and Kathy Kersten regarding HF 29.

Furthermore, the so-called ethnic studies requirements should be repealed; the ethnic studies appropriations should be cancelled; the social studies standards adoption suspended, and the review cycle modified. Karin Miller, Kendall Qualls, and Kathy Kersten are much better prepared than myself to explain the details in support of these requests.

Of my own accord, I would like to recommend the book titled, "Indoctrinating Our Children To Death, Government Schools' War on Faith, Family & Freedom - and How To Stop It" by Alex Newman. Today's evil, yes - evil, Marxist leaning government schools in the State of Minnesota are also waging war on facts, truth, and academic education, but Alex Newman's book title is already long enough as it is. Alex Newman's website is libertysentinel.org Another additional website, PublicSchoolExit.com, exists in order to help rescue our vulnerable, precious children from being indoctrinated or groomed with the evil, immoral lies being taught in government schools in Minnesota.

For the record, although perhaps unrelated to HF29, there exists male anatomy and female anatomy. There is no such thing in science as trans-female anatomy or trans-male anatomy; trans anatomy does not exist.

Thank you.

Daniel Passer

1201 Robert St S, Ste 3-18172

West Saint Paul MN 55118

HF 29 – Support - Regenscheid

I am writing to let you know I SUPPORT HF29. I believe the focus in the classroom needs to be on educating the students in the subjects of math, writing, reading, and science. The Ethnic Studies curriculum does not create a sense of belonging, but rather it forces students to hyper focus on skin color and race. These standards will not advance scholars academically and need to be taken out of the educational requirement in Minnesota.

Sincerely,

Brenda Regenscheid

Dakota County Resident

HF 29 – Comments in Support

I am a first generation American of Filipino decent. My father, who was born in the Philippines came to America when he was 17. He was able to become a citizen in 2017 and I can say that might have been the greatest day of his life, and many of the other attendees that gained citizenship that day. Never once growing up did I think I did not belong because I looked different than my classmates and teachers. Never once did I feel like I wasn't welcomed in a classroom because no one else looked like me. The sense of belonging came from the respect I was shown by my teacher and classmates, and the environment around me. I am now an adult and have bi-racial children. I do not want their skin color or ethnic differences highlighted in the curriculum. I do believe this creates resentment towards other ethnicities. In the classroom, the focus needs to be on math, reading, writing, and science. It does not need to be on separating students by their ethnicity. I am in favor of repealing this bill and request it not be added to the requirements for education in the classroom.

Thank you for listening,

Cinta Schmitz

Resident of Lakeville

My name is Jennifer Thayer and I am a resident of White Bear Lake, Mn.

According to the Minnesota statutory definition of ethnic studies, the term

“ethnic studies” means the interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity , and indigeneity with a focus on the experiences and perspectives of people of color.

As a parent, I read that and think, How wonderful! Students will get to learn to appreciate other cultures and their contributions to our melting pot of a country!

Yet, as a teacher, I read that knowing the difficulties teachers will face as they attempt to balance the vast experience and perspectives in a classroom of not fully developed brains.

How will a teacher grade immeasurable examples and opinions? Will one opinion trump another?

Minnesota legislators, you have gone too far with this attempt to restructure an educational system in our state that needs to remain measurable. Measurable with goals and a curriculum-base that inspires individual thought while focusing on historical, fact-based data.

When I read further into the 2021 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies, listed to be fully implemented in 2026-27, I see a projected benchmark for Kindergarten Ethnic Studies. Minnesota teacher’s will expect a 5 year old to comprehend “Resistance, describe fights for liberation against systemic power, and organize to further the rights of all.”

This is not an age-appropriate approach to academic achievement.

I for one, as a parent and educator, feel Minnesotans need to stand up against political interference in schools. I’m counting on you to vote to nullify these social studies standards.

HF 29 – Support - Walsh

I am writing in regards to HF29- ethnic studies requirement in MN Schools. As a concerned father of 4, I am more concerned about the reading, writing and math levels that the current students are testing at. I am asking that you vote in favor of HF 29, and support our schools who are teaching these children and give them a chance at life..

Thank you,

John Walsh

HF 29 – Support - Walsh

I'm writing in support of HF 29-ethnic studies requirements in MN schools. Please focus on where the students need the most help (math, reading, and writing).

Sincerely,

Bethany Molde Walsh

HF 29 - Walch

Good afternoon, I would like to submit a comment regarding House Bill 29. As both a middle school educator and citizen, I was very concerned when the recent social studies standards were approved with very few people having input about them. It seemed like it was very much agenda driven and not necessarily in the interest of educating our children about civics, government, and history. I would like to respectfully submit my request that HF29 be passed and the people of Minnesota and the children of Minnesota be given an opportunity again to learn social studies without a one-sided political slant.. respectfully, Kristin Walch, Duluth, MN

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

I am a constituent and public educator with over a decade of experience working with culturally and linguistically diverse student populations in Minnesota. I am writing to express my strong support for HF 29, which would repeal the current Ethnic Studies mandates and the recently adopted social studies standards.

A multicultural approach to education is essential for fostering understanding and respect among students of diverse backgrounds, but the current Ethnic Studies requirements in Minnesota deviate from this inclusive vision. Instead of promoting a balanced and comprehensive picture of various cultural groups and historical leaders, the current Ethnic Studies standards introduce ideologically charged concepts that may inadvertently marginalize certain groups, including Jewish students.

The new Ethnic Studies strand of social studies standards incorporates terminology and perspectives that can be polarizing and present a singular narrative view of history. For example, the "Resistance" standard to "Describe how individuals and communities have fought for freedom and liberation against systemic and coordinated exercises of power locally and globally. Identify strategies or times that have resulted in lasting change. Organizing with others to engage in activities that could further the rights and dignity of all" is not only developmentally inappropriate for young elementary school students, but it can also lead to a one-dimensional view of complex historical events and foster binary thinking regarding current affairs. Such narratives have portrayed Israel as an illegitimate state and created educational environments where Jewish students feel alienated or targeted.

Notably, the social studies standards review committee was packed by members from Education for Liberation Network Minnesota (a fact they openly admit on their website), an organization committed to integrating its narrow ideological version of Ethnic Studies into K-12 public schools. This influence is evident in the current standards, which reflect a singular viewpoint rather than a truly multicultural approach. Alarming, the initial draft of the social studies standards omitted major historical events, including the Holocaust, necessitating intervention from advocacy groups to address these oversights.

It is undeniably important to educate students about the histories and contributions of diverse, underrepresented groups, but the current Ethnic Studies mandates approach this goal in a manner that will sow division rather than unity. The previous social studies standards already encompassed learning about diverse peoples and cultures, and reverting to them will allow the legislature more time to consider how Ethnic Studies can be implemented in Minnesota in a fair and non-discriminatory manner.

The Stand With Us Ethnic Studies Toolkit offers insight into differentiating between a "multicultural" approach to Ethnic Studies versus the "liberated" or "critical social justice" approach that Minnesota has taken. I encourage you to consult this resource to understand how Minnesota's current Ethnic Studies standards and framework will not serve our diverse student population well.

In light of these concerns, I urge the committee to advance HF 29. By doing so, you can work towards developing an educational framework that truly embodies a multicultural approach to education and one that fosters unity and understanding.

Sincerely,

Rachael Bauleke
Hopkins, MN

February 17, 2025

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

As a Minnesota educator of 24 years, and a constituent, I oppose HF 29, which if passed, would suspend the adoption of the social studies standards, repeal the ethnic studies requirements, and cancel all ethnic studies appropriations. I ask you to reject this bill in its entirety, and consider the reasons for this bill's introduction and purpose. It does not mandate anything that is helpful to Minnesota teachers and students, while it dismantles and defiles what is strongest in Minnesota's proud tradition of high quality education: consistency, oversight, best practices and innovation, equity and inclusion.

These changes, and others found in a plethora of bills introduced this session, are a calculated attack on Minnesota's tradition of high quality K12 education, and our commitment to improving inclusion and equity in our schools. These bills are nothing more than an attempt to silence the voices of Minnesota's historically underserved populations, marginalized and underrepresented groups, and people of color and different cultures. In fact, HF29 in conjunction with other bills like HF6, HF12, HF65, and others, are meant to overwhelm and confuse the masses, but behind the scenes, give districts and school boards carte blanche to dismantle protections for our most vulnerable students and educators, and removes any state oversight, leaving those harmed by these changes without any recourse or supports. These bills effectively cancel decades of important and collaborative work between lawmakers, the Department of Education, PELSB and a diverse, and well rounded community of stakeholders and gives individual districts and school boards sole control over licensure, academic standards, course development and topics, graduation requirements and how students are treated in our schools; some very different than others, just because they are not considered "normal". It is unconscionable. Please ask yourself, "what is wrong with giving students a safe space to explore various historical perspectives, and the causes and effects of these events in our past?" Surely, we want our students to think critically and analyze how and why these events in history came to be, and learn from them.

Oversight is essential to maintain consistency in best practice content and pedagogical methods used throughout the state. Oversight provides a pathway for stakeholders to collaborate and hold each other accountable. Oversight allows for diversity and inclusion to be considered and improved upon as we learn more about how to reach all students effectively. Finally, oversight provides frameworks that protect all students.

I implore you to think about the lasting consequences of passing bills like HF 29 and others like it, that undo decades of collaborative legislative work, and would provide our students invaluable experiences as they analyze history. This bill will lead to educational, physical, and emotional harm to Minnesota students. It will not be something we can come back from. Please see this bill for what it is - a strategic attack on public education, and the underrepresented students, families and communities we serve. Please oppose HF29 in its entirety.

Sincerely,

Dana Smith

Dana Smith

damedu2018@gmail.com

507-271-2186



February 17, 2025

Representative Peggy Bennett, Chair
House Education Policy Committee
State Capitol Room G23
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Statement in support of HF 29

Representative Bennett and House Committee Members,

My name is Katherine Kersten, and I am a senior policy fellow at Center of the American Experiment. I am writing today in support of HF 29.

Minnesota policymakers have entrenched Liberated Ethnic Studies ideology in every grade and academic subject in our state’s public schools—by legal mandate in 2023 and K-12 Social Studies standards in 2024.

They sold Ethnic Studies as promoting racial understanding—something all kind, empathetic Minnesotans should support.

But from the beginning, MDE and bill authors knowingly gave power to design and lead the new Ethnic Studies regime to political advocacy groups that intend to remake our schools—and our society—by replacing academic instruction with K-12 education centered on activism, resistance and “race-and-power analysis,” starting in kindergarten.

Now MDE’s handpicked “Ethnic Studies Working Group” has completed its 62-page framework for implementing Ethnic Studies across our state.

It’s the product of members and allies of the Minnesota Ethnic Studies Coalition, whose leader, Brian Lozenski—a primary Framework author—has called for the overthrow of the U.S. government.

Here’s what our students will be learning under the Framework:

- Third graders will study “solidarity movements like the Third World Liberation Front and the Delano grape strike,” and create “protest” “dances of resistance.”
- Sixth graders will learn about “Black Power as resistance,” “explore George Floyd Square,” and “drive around the Twin Cities” looking at “murals combatting racism.”



- Ninth graders will study lynchings in Duluth in 1920. The Framework never teaches students about America’s Civil Rights laws.

Teachers must undergo intrusive, cult-like professional development as a condition of employment. They will be pressured to “continuously reflect on my identities and relationships to structure and power,” and develop the tools to “challenge white supremacy.”

Minnesota’s new authoritarian Ethnic Studies regime is a disastrous mistake.

It will profoundly damage students of all backgrounds—especially at a time when a majority can’t read or do math at grade level. It is also a clear violation of a new executive order, which will put federal funds at risk for all Minnesota schools.

Back in your district, how will you explain to appalled parents why you didn’t correct course on this travesty when you had the opportunity to do so? I urge you to support HF 29 for the good of all our state’s children.

Sincerely,

Katherine Kersten

Katherine Kersten
Senior Policy Fellow
Center of the American Experiment

To Whom it May Concern;

My name is Mariah Hines, I am a paraprofessional in a local high school as well as a mother of 2. I am writing today in support of bill HF 29 to repeal the ethnic studies mandate. As a mother and a paraprofessional I can tell you that our kids are struggling. They struggle to read, the struggle to write, and they struggle to do math. Instead of adding more requirements for schools and children we need to focus on how we can get them proficient in reading, writing, and math. These are the things that our kids will need in order to be successful in the world.

Aside from wanting our schools to teach our children the basics I can also attest that these ethnic studies are extremely divisive. Kids today do not need anything else presented to them that causes more tension in their lives. The school I work at is 99% white, but has a huge poverty level. Most of these kids have parents who are either current or ex drug users, a large portion of them are not even living with either parent. These kids have struggles I never would have dreamed of as a teenager. I've seen some of these kids "ethnic studies" and you want me to tell these kids that even though they are living without their parents, in a house that might not even have electrical or water, that they have white privilege? I refuse to make their lives more difficult and confusing. These kids are going through more than anyone in this committee has ever experienced and you do not need to put more on their plate. Instead let us focus on teaching reading, writing, and math so we can give these kids a chance in the world.

Mariah Hines

Exhibit A: Illustration of Ethnic Studies from the Ethnic Studies Working Group Recommendation Draft; page 9; October 2024

Figure 1: Illustration of Ethnic Studies

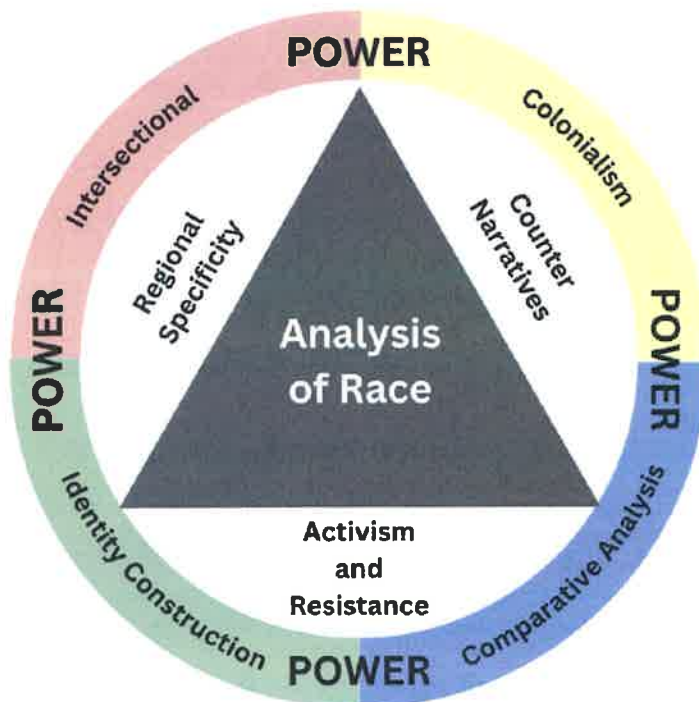
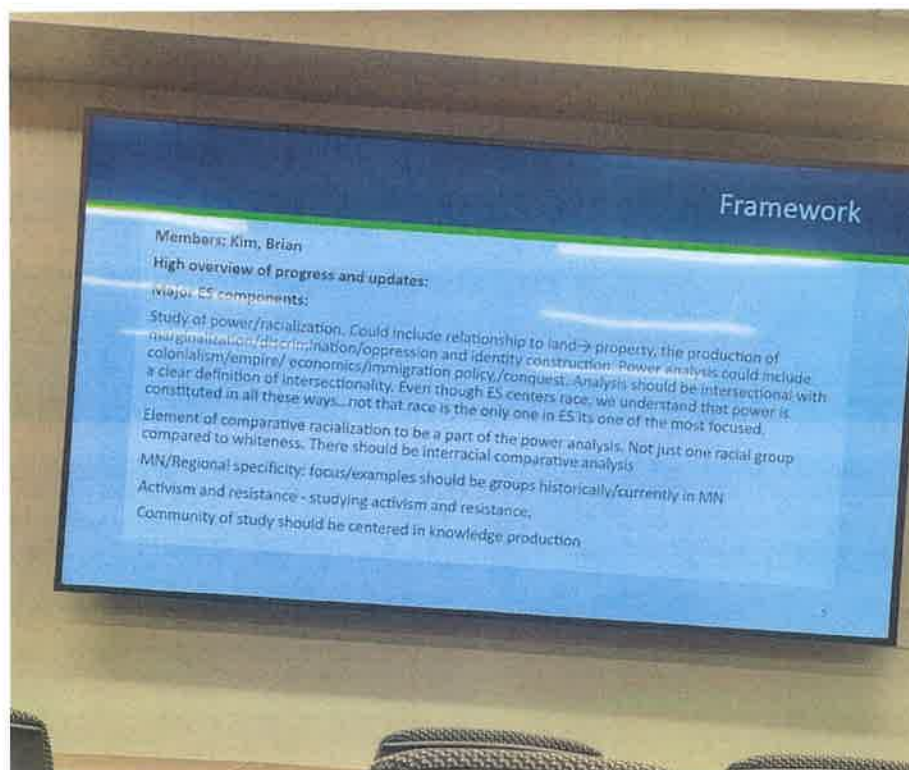


Exhibit B: PowerPoint slide from an Ethnic Studies Working Group public meeting showing Brian Lozenski as one of two lead members on the Framework writing team; June 25, 2024



Ethnic studies are important to being American, and vital to our economy and our children's future.

Ethnic studies are American studies. We have been a "melting pot" of people from other nations for more than 200 years and Native Americans for 1400 years or more. Our Founding Fathers were immigrants and today our elected officials at the state and federal levels are Americans from a multitude of backgrounds and heritages. Why? Because that reflects the United States of America.

To try to keep this truth from our students is nothing short of brainwashing; it is falsification of our truth as a nation and as a state. It is a lie whether overt or by omission as to what has led to our successes and our failures from which we must continue to learn.

Ethnic studies provide a means to understand our fellow Americans, *all* Americans, not just the very few who are descendants from the Mayflower. I am one such descendant. You likely are not. My English and Dutch relatives from great-grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins all knew and taught us the value of diversity, the value of seeing beyond our own backyards and the necessity of seeing the world beyond our own borders.

My grandmother descended from the Harts, the founders of Wall Street. The wall they built was to protect assets. The wall was **not** to hide from the world or to become isolationists. Wall Street has *always* been a global enterprise.

This is simply the truth. This is reality. It is the world we live in.

Denying our students the truth and perspective puts them at a disadvantage while the rest of world takes advantage. Our students will merge into a global economy. Some of you may dream of a dictatorship and fascism but you also need to wake up to the fact that none have ever developed into strong economies.

I've worked for global companies and have traveled to offices around the world. A "whites only, Christian only" view would have made business progress impossible and rightfully cost me my job.

Ethnic studies allow students a greater understanding and greater opportunity.

Ethnic studies ultimately fosters a more informed and culturally competent citizenry. Ethnic studies provide a critical lens to examine societies, histories, cultures and experiences of everyone here in the United States and of those around the world. To send a student into the world thinking the white American way is the only way is a lie and it diminishes, if not eliminates, our students' chances of success.

Audrey Britton

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