



## **AKISSI**

Hello everyone,

My name is Akissi, and I'm here in support of bill H5836. I'm here to talk about why bringing ethnic studies into high schools is not just important, it's necessary.

I used to attend a predominantly white institution, and it was extremely stressful, so much the point where it affected my mental health. Not just because I was one of the few students of color, but because I constantly had to explain myself, my culture, and my identity. I didn't see myself reflected in the curriculum, and that invisibility weighed on me.

Ethnic studies can change that.

According to a Stanford University study, students who took an ethnic studies course showed a 21% increase in attendance and their GPAs improved by an average of 1.4 grade points. That's huge. It shows that when students feel seen and represented, they show up and they thrive. Ethnic studies doesn't just benefit students of color. It helps all students build empathy, understand history from multiple perspectives, and prepare to be thoughtful citizens in an increasingly diverse society.

When we only tell one side of the story, we leave out voices that matter and students notice. And I know I did.

So let's bring ethnic studies into high schools not just as an elective, but as a core part of the curriculum. Because every student deserves to see themselves in what they learn.

Thank you.