

To the House Committee on Judiciary,

I am writing in support of House Bill 5836, the Ethnic Studies bill. This bill will require every high school to offer a yearlong “ethnic studies” course studying Rhode Island and American history and the experiences of racialized communities in Rhode Island and the United States, and would create an ethnic studies leadership council to oversee implementation of the requirements. This is a great opportunity for Rhode Island students to learn more about the history that is often erased from our schools' curricula.

Every Rhode Islander deserves to learn about their culture's history. This bill will ensure that more Rhode Islanders will see their history and their ancestors' stories in a history class, instead of just hearing about the ones that got to write history. This kind of curriculum may be even more important in communities that are more homogeneous than those that are diverse. If students grow up in a majority White neighborhood and go to a majority White school, they are living in a very skewed version of the world. These students are being set up for a culture shock, at the very best, when they go off to college or move away for their first job. These students are not being set up for success to live in a multi-ethnic world, and not only are they going to suffer for it, but the people of color that they interact with will be infinitely worse off.

Please support H5836. We live in a multi-ethnic world. We should be teaching our students about it so that all students can benefit.

Thank you.

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