



ARISE

April 23rd, 2025

House Bill 5836– “Our History, Our Schools, Our Future: About Ethnic Studies Bill”

Dear Chair McNamara and Honorable Members of the Committee,

My name is Christopher. I am a junior, an Afro Latino, and a Youth Leader at ARISE. I am writing to support House Bill No. 5836 because I feel it is a necessary factor for a better future. We need to take this step to let our schools and our communities as a whole get the knowledge they need. We should know our history and why we are where we are. Ethnic studies wouldn't be about outing anyone for anything; we would instead be bringing near lost history into the light and righting such well known wrongs. We shouldn't be celebrating the assailants, the assailants who genocided indigenous people, but we celebrate them for years instead, ~~celebrate them instead~~ of educating our youth on what really happened. During holidays and whatnot like during Indigenous Peoples Day, which was formerly known as Columbus Day, we knew what happened for many years. It wasn't news to us, however, it still took too many years to be known instead as Indigenous Peoples Day.

When I first started school, I didn't speak English and felt out of place. I tried to fit in whilst others enjoyed themselves, turning to books to feel a sense of belonging. It took a year to make my first friend, someone who additionally struggled with language and becoming in. Learning about my lifestyle afterward made me understand how precise my background is. If there had been an Ethnic Studies class, I might've regarded sooner that I wasn't on my own and that others shared comparable experiences. I was constantly told that I was too white by my mom but then I'm called too dark by my dad. In Puerto Rico, I'd be treated oddly because of my skin at the time and my family would treat me weird simply because of my ethnic background which I was completely uncertain of. With Ethnic Studies, I would have better understand the complexities of my identity and concepts such as colorism within my community. I urge you to support this bill because there may be another child in need of belonging, another who needs to know really what they're from through the lens of race, power, privilege, and oppression.

Thank you,

Christopher
11th grade

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