



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,

Good afternoon, my name is Juan and I am a Youth Leader at ARISE. I'm Dominican and Puerto Rican and I am currently an 11th grader. I'm speaking in support of House Bill No. 5836 because this bill will pave the way for my people's history out of the dark and into the light, our culture shall no longer be shunned or diminished. A person's history is their greatest wisdom for themselves. As a student who is going to school without this bill in place, all I learned was this one-sided, Eurocentric view of history that was presented and taught in school. I didn't even know who I was, what my identity was. It wasn't until I moved to Rhode Island, and that's when I learned that there was a whole array of different people that was never presented to me, that there was more to history besides the one-sided view of history. I never saw hope for my people's culture to be taught in school until I took a leap of faith into the unknown and came across ARISE, which introduced me to OurSchoolsPVD. This bill would help my people and my culture be heard and seen but not only for myself but for everyone's way of life and how that came to be, without our stories and history we would never have the lesson that came with them that helped us build our foundation, our character and who we are. The people who came before us left blueprints to construct a path for us. No matter how far my history has been cast away in this vast ocean of stories I will always cast my rod, as I will always reach for the opportunities to learn more and will continue to inspire others to do the same for themselves. For all the unspoken history I strongly encourage you to pass this bill to pave the way for not only us but for the future.

Thank you for your time,

Juan
11th grade