

Dear Committee Members,

Below please see my testimony in support of Bill H5836. Please let me know if you have any questions or if you would like any additional information.

My name is Lindsay Paiva and I teach third grade multilingual learners at Webster Avenue Elementary School in Providence. I am writing in support of Bill H5836.

I believe that schools and classrooms are an extension of our broader community, and as such, should be spaces where students can ask questions, process complex topics, and work together to understand their worlds. Our classrooms are the spaces in which we practice how to be in community with one another. Educators have a responsibility to support students to develop the critical thinking skills necessary to comprehend and analyze the problems we face as a society and to dream up solutions and actions grounded in community organizing that uplift marginalized voices to help shape the changes our world needs.

Every day, I see the ways that eight-year-olds in my classroom are able to name issues, break them apart, and brainstorm solutions with more clarity and efficiency than most adults I know. Our students deserve to know the truth. They deserve to learn world histories through an honest and critical lens, not from a whitewashed, Euro-centric and U.S.-centric perspective.

If we are not able to do this work, our democracy, and society as we know it, will continue to be in peril. As a white woman, I have found liberation in learning the true history of this country and the ways in which I have benefitted from racist systems. This knowledge did not shame me or paralyze me; instead, it has empowered me to reduce harm, make time and space for reparations, and organize in community to work toward something better through a multiracial movement for justice.

We cannot keep protecting white supremacist interests to keep white people comfortable. Ending the violence, trauma, and erasure that children of color often face in schools should be prioritized over the discomfort of white children in the classroom. Pretending that racism and sexism do not exist in order to reduce the shame of students from the dominant group only amplifies the smoke and mirrors of white supremacy and patriarchy.

The status quo is racist, heteronormative, ableist, sexist. Why would we fight to uphold that when that is exactly what we need to dismantle? Ensuring that all students have access to high quality ethnic studies curriculum will ensure that our young people have the skills they need to move through the world with a critical lens and with the knowledge of truthful, justice-oriented history.

We must rebuild from the ground up, this time centering the voices of people of color and youth. We must keep moving toward justice. And it can start in the classroom. It can start with Ethnic Studies.

Sincerely,
Lindsay Paiva

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Lindsay Paiva
Providence Teacher

Pronouns: she, her, hers