



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,

Hi my name is Milia, I am a student in 11th grade and a youth organizer with ARISE and youth leader with OurSchoolsPVD. I am writing in support of House Bill No. 5836. This bill is going to implement Ethnic Studies statewide, impacting not only me, but my peers as well. I have never taken Ethnic Studies inside a school classroom, but I have taken a course and facilitated it over the summer. From elementary school to now, my schools were very diverse, my classmates came from multiple different countries and backgrounds and I have never seen them be represented in the Providence Public School District curriculum.

I have not seen any ethnic race properly represented in the curriculum either. That is the problem. Without knowing the truth or history about our peers or our land brought ignorance. Microaggressions, that aren't so “micro”, feed its way into the school system. Not only from teachers, but other students as well. Which not only brings down students, but their ability to succeed in the school system. The implementation of Ethnic Studies will help break that cycle. Ethnic studies shows how we all intersect, where we come from, our history, breaking down these barriers we never knew existed. I know what it's like to not want to be the race you were born as, to hate your skin, your hair, and the way you spoke. Growing up, I thought I was the problem, now I know I wasn't the only one who thought that. I am now able to be myself and to love myself for who I am, but what about my younger cousins growing up in the Providence Public School District. What about my nephew who will grow up in the same district? Up until high school, all of my teachers were white, it was only when I got on my street, into my house, where I fully felt understood and represented.

Providence is very diverse, people of different backgrounds live here and having teachers and staff that look like us and speak the same language as us, will benefit us greatly in the long run. This matters because this not only affects my life and my future, but the younger generations as well that will grow up in Providence. I hope they will feel more safe and comfortable growing up in their community knowing that they're being seen, not only in schools, where they will spend most of their time growing up, but also in their community. They will not only have their peers that look like them, come from the same place as them, speak the same language as them, or even have the same history as them, but teachers and role models as well.

Thank you for allowing me to submit my testimony for my peers, underclassman, and community. Please consider passing Bill 5836, this bill will reach towards our future, our education, and our community, helping youth statewide learn about the detrimental effects of the school system and its curriculum.

Thank you,

Milia Odom
11th grade