



## **NAIOMMY BARET**

My name is Naiommy Baret. I'm writing in support of bill H5836. I'm a parent, parent organizer at PLEE and someone who believes deeply in the power of education to build belonging, truth, and justice.

As a parent, I want my children to be seen, heard, and honored in their education. I want them to understand where they come from and how systems have shaped the lives of our communities, not to feel shame, but to find power and purpose. I want them to sit in classrooms that don't shy away from complexity, but lean into it with compassion and honesty.

We are living in a time when Black and Brown histories are being erased from classrooms across the nation. From book bans to laws restricting how race and identity can be discussed, we are witnessing a deliberate effort to dismantle public education as a space for truth-telling, critical thinking, and liberation. That makes this moment, here in Rhode Island, all the more urgent.

The Ethnic Studies Bill is a bold and necessary step toward ensuring our young people are not robbed of their histories or their voices. It would establish a yearlong Ethnic Studies course in every high school and make it a core graduation requirement. It would ensure that students in Rhode Island learn about Native and Indigenous peoples, African American history, Latin American contributions, Asian American and Pacific Islander experiences, the Armenian Genocide and more.

I know I'm not alone. Families across Rhode Island want our children to graduate ready to lead with empathy and courage, to stand up against injustice, and to understand the interconnected stories that have brought us to this moment. This is what Ethnic Studies offers and it's why it must be protected and expanded.

This bill was co-written with students and as parents we are so incredibly proud of them! Our young people are not asking for permission to lead, they are already leading.

It's our responsibility to back them with policy that reflects their brilliance and boldness.

In championing this bill, these young leaders are paving the way for all children in Rhode Island. I envision my little Afro-Latino boy growing up to be a proud young man, confident in his roots and inspired by the courage and leadership of these trailblazers. We are not just opening the doors to courses; we are building confident and courageous adults who lead with love and empathy for all. Together, they are setting an example for future generations, proving that with education rooted in truth and justice, our children can lead the way toward a brighter future .

We want to thank youth organizers who worked tirelessly with Representative Morales on this legislation and to all of the sponsors.

Thank you.