

Hello. My name is Nevaeh Senecal. I am a senior Visual Art major at Jacqueline M. Walsh School for Visual and Performing Arts in Pawtucket, the Lead Organizer for the youth organization Providence Youth Student Movement, and alumni of OurSchoolsProvidence's Youth Leaders Cohort.

I am here on behalf of Bill H5836, which introduces a yearlong ethnic studies course, but also provides an expansive and ever-changing curriculum uplifted and designed by our communities.

Learning history from the Pawtucket School Department has been downright pathetic, from a lack of proper studying materials to a confusing curriculum -- but also a hyper-focus on Eurocentric and American viewpoints and biases.

It's embarrassing!

Our district has been devoid of representation and our teachers lack experience in facilitating students' knowledge of their own history. It took me to enter my organization's youth space to learn about Hawaii.

And that's the state here!

Being in this youth-led space, where we could discuss history, and hearing from people either affected or properly informed drove me to want to get involved with Ethnic Studies-- because it definitely wasn't being taught at my school.

Ethnic Studies is important to me, as a biracial Cape Verdean high school student, to learn my own background and history.

Something that hasn't been brought up once, within my experience in public school.

But also the fights, oppression, and success experienced by all people of color. Discussing matters like imperialism, intersectionality, the social construction of identity and the school-to-prison-to-deportation pipeline provides students with the resources to critically analyze

oppression they might be witnessing or experiencing, but also provides students with the ability to develop a consciousness separate from former ignorance.

The ethnic studies course that would be created would uplift PSDRI. For instance, this course would provide students with vast amounts of CCA projects for their graduation portfolios. This seems to prevent or delay several students' graduation progress, but also uplift and provide educators of color with adequate support and resources to mirror its diverse student population and break into the teaching field by opening more positions and opportunities.

This summer I had the opportunity to attend the youth organization, ARISE's summer ethnic studies program. There with other students of color, we discussed power privilege and the process of unlearning and recognition.

Unlearning white-washed history, unlearning white supremacist labels, and recognizing the systems and institutions above us.

But especially discussing the power and privilege people have, ethnic studies allow for students of all colors to change their viewpoint to one that's cross-cultural. Ethnic studies allows students regardless of race to perceive the world through a different lens, one without ignorance or the white viewpoint.

I believe that by implementing ethnic studies within our schools with bill H5836, we are investing in our education, but we are also investing in ourselves and our future. We, as students of color, have been unrepresented for far too long. It is time to discuss our stories and our history.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration. Have a good evening.

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