



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,

My name is Sarah. I'm a senior and a Youth Leader at ARISE. I am writing to support House Bill No. 5836 because I believe it is crucial for students to learn their culture and how it's interconnected with their history in America. This creates a space for students to feel comfortable within their school that acknowledges their heritage and makes everyone feel welcome. The passing of the bill also gives students that differ from each other the opportunity to learn from their peers' experiences. Learning about my own history was revolutionary. None of the five schools I've been to had any idea about my Ethnic people, despite a community living here for decades. I felt for once in this predominantly White town and school that I was recognized, and was proud to speak on my own experiences. It was being explored and valued in my English classroom.

I personally have taken ethnic studies as an elective and it covered a multitude of histories, especially events that have occurred here in America. Although there were only 13 other students who took the course with me, we learned a lot from others when we presented projects for the sake of learning about major events, simply to be aware. I presented a project on the Japanese incarceration during World War 2. The most memorable project for me was The Tulsa Race Massacre because a massacre to this degree should be heard of and be brought awareness to, but hasn't been. I likely would have never learned it that day, or even social media, had it not been for my classmate. Also that day, the entire class all responded positively to each other's projects based on a survey conducted by my teacher. This is just one example of the many successes of implementing Ethnic Studies into schools. Imagine if schools were able to implement it into all schools. The effects would be astonishing, seen through the school community and soon districts. Therefore, I urge you to please support this bill and pass it because it will give students the opportunity to engage with diverse perspectives, understand the full scope of our nation's history, and build a stronger, more empathetic community. My experience in Ethnic Studies showed me how powerful education can be when it reflects the voices and stories of everyone. With this implementation, more students can experience the same eye-opening growth and mutual respect the way my classmates and I did.

Thank you,

Sarah
12th grade