



# ARISE

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 Savannah and I am a Youth Leader at ARISE. I am writing to support House Bill No. 5836 because I feel other youth should experience an Ethnic Studies course. I would like to start off by saying that I myself identify as a Cambodian girl. While growing up, even in the present I still don't know much about the history of my own family's origins. *What have they been through? And does it still affect them to this day?* These questions arouse my head very often. Even from a young age though I'd ask them *how did they come to America? What was there childhood for the most part?* I recall being around the age of 11 and it was my first time hearing "Cambodian Genocide." I was very curious and wanted to ask my parents about that topic. Even when I did ask my parents these questions, the response I got was very vague enough for me to digest at that age. In the modern day, I still ponder upon what my parents had gone through to be here in America.

In my school, Ethnic Studies is available, however it is only available for juniors and seniors. I myself haven't gotten to experience Ethnic Studies within my school. That being said, I have experienced an Ethnic Studies course at ARISE. This Ethnic Studies course under ARISE was extremely beneficial to me. It was actually something I looked forward to every morning in the middle of my summer breaks. My parents were always working, and didn't have that much time to teach me about my own culture. The ARISE Ethnic Studies course helped me learn at least some of my own culture while also focusing on my peers' background. This course has also helped us identify the powers and privileges we have, what oppression is, how it may be affecting some of us, and how we can try to reduce it. For me personally, this course has helped me trace my individual identity and powers that I may have.

With this experience, I felt like I have been enlightened, or blossomed into a person more confident than I was before, and I want my peers to have the same high-quality experience of Ethnic Studies that I have had too. I strongly urge you to support House Bill No. 5836. The Ethnic Studies course will be able to captivate the students interest more, as Ethnic Studies honors the students. It will give the students an opportunity to learn about themselves in a modern classroom. Whether it's their own original background, the powers and privileges they possess, or the oppressions people face in modern society. It honors the students and will be beneficial to them because it gives representation to the students, can give students the insight of what others around them might be facing, examples including other's oppression and origins, and can also give the insight of where one stands in this society.

Thank you for taking the time to hear my voice.

Savannah  
9th grade