



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 Theophilus and I am a Youth Leader at ARISE. I am writing to support House Bill No. 5836 because honestly, a lot of my own culture is lost to me. My father left when I was young, which has led me to try and stumble around with finding my own culture. As a white-presenting Latino, I have trouble finding information about myself. The only way that I am able to learn about my culture is inside of a school, and that is often whitewashed. A specific example of this is the romanticization of Hernán Cortés. When we covered him in my World History course, my teacher seemed to idolize what he had done to the Aztec people. If an Ethnic Studies course had been available in place of this course, this information would have been presented in a more sensitive way, with more respect given to the Aztecs, and with greater care taken to share the perspective of the Aztecs.

This new bill would give me an opportunity to learn more about my culture from people who are either like me or related to my culture in a certain way. Not only is this related to me but also other students like me. Students who don't have the availability to speak at a hearing like this. So I am asking you to pass this bill because it is imperative to make sure students can learn about themselves.

Thank you,

Theophilus
10th grade