



ARISE

March 1, 2021

Testimony in Support of House Bill #H5421 – “Right to Adequate Education”

Chairman Shanley and members of the House Committee on State Government and Elections:

My name is Samia Nash. I am a senior at Classical High School and a youth organizer for ARISE. I am writing this testimony in support of House Bill 5421 to have the right to have adequate education inserted in the Rhode Island Constitution.

Many times, I have asked myself if the information I am learning is going to benefit me in the future. I want to learn about how to file my taxes, how to register to vote, know what qualifies me to buy a house, how to budget, how to effectively run a campaign for a position in the government, and many other things that I will need to have when I leave school grounds. The things I am actually learning are things that for temporary means, such as standardized testing and my grade point average. I would rather be tested on the concepts I need for survival so that if in any case, I do not do well on these subjects, I can be tutored and taught how to accurately perform these tasks correctly in the future.

In my History courses, I was often the token student whenever the subject revolves around the history of Black people or the concept of living as a Black individual. The teacher would rely on my good judgment to prove the information they were teaching the class was accurate as if I knew every single detail about the history of my ancestors. I have also seen Asian, Hispanic, and Native-American students become token students as well to speak on the perspective of being an individual of the minority race as if their experiences are shared among all Asian, Hispanic, and Native-American people. If our education system has to rely on students to teach their peers and not have eligible educators to take on the responsibility to do their own research on our history, then this is a serious problem that needs improving. We need to hold our education system legally accountable for the job they are supposed to be doing and making sure the education these students are gaining is tailored to them.

As important as it is to have the “right to bear arms,” “right to assembly,” and the “freedom to religion,” it should be on our agenda to have the “right to adequate education” so that we, as

students, are able to have equal opportunities and have the ability make our own personal and educated decisions.

Samia Nash

Senior at Classical High School

Youth Organizer at ARISE