



CHUCK WICHGERS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 83rd ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Joint Hearing on Education

August 11, 2021

Assembly Bill 411 & Senate Bill 411

State Representative Chuck Wichgers, 83rd Assembly District

Chairwoman Darling, Chairman Thiesfeldt, and Committee Members,

Thank you for hearing my testimony today on Assembly Bill 411 and Senate Bill 411 relating to anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees of school districts and independent charter schools.

I am co-authoring this legislation with Sen. Jacque to reaffirm the 14th Amendment of the United States Constitution. Section 1 of the amendment states, "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

The proposed legislation seeks to enforce Section 1 of the 14th Amendment, also known as the Equal Protection Clause. We are asking the governor and the legislature to pass this bill to prevent government schools from violating this amendment which we all took an oath to uphold.

It has come to our attention, and to some of the people who traveled here to Madison today, that a growing number of school districts are teaching material that attempts to redress the injustice of racism and sexism by employing racism and sexism, as well as promoting psychological distress in students based on these immutable characteristics. No one should have to undergo the humiliation of being told that they are inferior to someone else; we are all members of the human race.

As a state and a nation, we will not defeat racism by employing racist behavior.

In fact, one of the main proponents of a term called critical race theory, Ibram Henry Rodgers, who later changed his name to Ibram X. Kendi is quoted as saying, "... the only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination."

I do not agree with his statement and I do not believe our schoolchildren or the employees at our government schools should be forced to listen to this pedagogy.

I mentioned the term critical race theory earlier. This is a catch-all term or an ever-changing term to

suit the needs of an argument. One of the most simplistic definitions I have seen is this: critical race theory centers on the idea that racism is systemic—that racial injustice is woven into the fabric of many American systems and institutions, thereby causing disparities and perpetuating the oppression of people of color.

I have an addendum to my testimony that lists several of the different terms associated with critical race theory or the words that are part of the praxis of the theory. Yes, it's extensive and you can tell a lot of this was created in legal academia, but the point of this legislation is to prohibit it from being taught in our government schools.

Detractors of this legislation assert that we are “trying to prohibit teachers from teaching about racism.” This could not be further from the truth. Assembly Bill 411 does not restrict teaching and inquiry about the history of racism; it restricts indoctrination, abusive pedagogies, and state-sanctioned racism. Directing teachers not to inculcate beliefs is very different from telling teachers they can't acknowledge the existence of certain ideas.

According to one leading researcher on the issue, Christopher F. Rufo, “CRT isn't an exercise in promoting racial sensitivity or understanding history. It's a radical ideology that seeks to use race as a means of moral, social, and political revolution. The left-leaning media has sought to portray it as a 'lens' for examining the history of racism in the U.S., but this soft framing obscures the nature of the theory, which maintains that America is an irredeemably racist nation and that the constitutional principles of freedom and equality are mere 'camouflages,' in the words of scholar William F. Tate IV, for white supremacy.

The problem is that critical race theory and its related ideas form a closed system. It is a perspective that leaves no space for anyone, no matter how well-intentioned, to see the world differently. When presented as the singular valid worldview, it is not a productive way to engage with students, groups, or with one another.

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony.

Addendum to Rep Wichgers' testimony on AB 411

Additional Terms

Additional terms and concepts below that either wholly violate the above clauses, or which may if taught through the framework of any of the prohibited activities defined above, partially violate the above clauses in what is otherwise broadly defined as "critical race theory":

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Action Civics

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Culturally responsive teaching

Abolitionist teaching

Affinity groups

Anti-racism

Anti-bias training

Anti-blackness

Anti-meritocracy

Obtuse meritocracy

Centering or de-centering

Collective guilt

Colorism

Conscious and unconscious bias

Critical ethnic studies

Critical pedagogy

Critical self-awareness

Critical self-reflection

Cultural appropriation/misappropriation

Cultural awareness

Cultural competence

Cultural proficiency

Cultural relevance

Cultural responsiveness
Culturally responsive practices
De-centering whiteness
Deconstruct knowledges
Diversity focused
Diversity training
Dominant discourses
Educational justice
Equitable
Equity
Examine "systems"
Free radical therapy
Free radical self/collective care
Hegemony
Identity deconstruction
Implicit/Explicit bias
Inclusivity education
Institutional bias
Institutional oppression
Internalized racial superiority
Internalized racism
Internalized white supremacy
Interrupting racism
Intersection
Intersectionality
Intersectional identities
Intersectional studies
Land acknowledgment
Marginalized identities
Marginalized/Minoritized/Under-represented communities

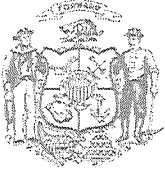
Microaggressions
Multiculturalism
Neo-segregation
Normativity
Oppressor vs. oppressed
Patriarchy
Protect vulnerable identities
Race essentialism
Racial healing
Racialized identity
Racial justice
Racial prejudice
Racial sensitivity training
Racial supremacy
Reflective exercises
Representation and inclusion
Restorative justice
Restorative practices
Social justice
Spirit murdering
Structural bias
Structural inequity
Structural racism
Systemic bias
Systemic oppression
Systemic racism
Systems of power and oppression
Unconscious bias
White fragility
White privilege

White social capital

White supremacy

Whiteness

Woke



ANDRÉ JACQUE

STATE SENATOR • 1ST SENATE DISTRICT

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Testimony before the Assembly and Senate Committees on Education

State Senator André Jacque

August 11, 2021

Chair Darling, Chair Thiesfeldt and Committee Members,

Thank you very much for holding this hearing on Senate Bill 411 and Assembly Bill 411. I am proud to join Rep. Wichgers and many of my colleagues in bringing forward legislation to stop a false narrative and promotion of racist indoctrination that does not belong in the classroom or the halls of government. These bills empower parents, students and employees and aim to continue the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his dream that we judge our children and our children's children not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

The bills do nothing to stop the teaching of history, only the attachment of ideology and promotion of division by insisting that racism or gender can and must explain every possible human interaction in today's society. The concept that the United States is fundamentally racist or sexist and that any individual, by virtue of his or her race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive is fundamentally untrue, and it is heartbreaking to hear from parents and students across Wisconsin, including those of mixed race backgrounds, how their children have been told that they should expect racial discrimination, or to achieve less than their individual merit and hard work justify, or that part of their household bears guilt for historic actions or even intrinsic contempt for another member of their household based solely on the family member's race.

We have introduced this legislation at the request of many parents in my district and throughout the state about the growing concern of the materials being taught to their children in their primary and secondary schools.

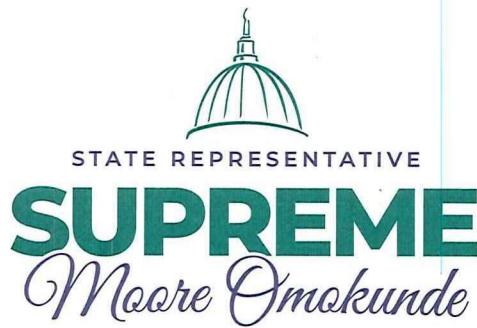
Transparency of a school district's individual school curricula is the most direct route to understand what is being taught in the classroom. Parents are asking for information about classroom curriculum and this legislation ensures they will be afforded this information via a school and/or school district website or a printed copy at no cost.

It has come to my attention that a growing number of school districts are teaching material that attempts to redress the injustice of racism and sexism by employing racism and sexism, as well as promoting psychological distress in students based on these immutable characteristics. This legislation will prohibit this type of material from entering our schools. No one should have to undergo the humiliation of being told that they are inferior to someone else; we are all members of the human race.

I am especially concerned that the National Education Association, which boasts 3 million members, recently passed a resolution claiming it is "reasonable and appropriate" to include Critical Race Theory in curriculum — and pledged to create "a team of staffers" to help teachers "fight back against anti-CRT rhetoric."

We need to protect our children and fight against this divisive ideology.

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 411 and Assembly Bill 411.



DATE: August 11, 2021

FROM: State Representative Supreme Moore Omokunde

TO: Assembly Committee on Education

RE: Testimony in Opposition to AB411 and AB488 - anti-racism and anti-sexism pupil instruction and anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees of school districts and independent charter schools.

Thank you Chairman Thiesfeldt and Members of the Assembly Committee on Education for the opportunity to testify in strong opposition to AB411 and AB488. I have seen bills similar to this introduced across the United States this year by Republican-majority legislatures and I am severely disappointed with the discourse surrounding this issue.

History, exactly as it happened, is complicated and often uncomfortable, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't collectively address it as one nation. Ignoring truths simply because they make people uncomfortable is not the answer – in fact, it is a recipe for further grandiose myths and conspiracies. We shouldn't whitewash our history more than it currently is: K-12 teachers already teach from curriculums that frame US history in a way that makes it seem like our collective issues are already solved!

Why are AB411 and AB488 problems? These bills are both racist and extremist. They seek to erase the history of Black and Brown folks in America, our struggle and lived experience. Rather than seeking to sideline true history and lived experience, we need to come to terms with it in order to form a more perfect union. Teaching the truth about America's past is not "sexual stereotyping" as my Republican colleagues argue...it is American history and American truth. Our past informs our present!

For example, Juneteenth has been celebrated in the United States since 1865, but only became an official national holiday this year. Yet under AB411 and AB488, teachers would be stripped of the ability to explain the significance of this day to their students! In the United States, our diversity has been and should be our strength: we should be proud to support equity and inclusion in our classrooms.

This legislation attempts to erase the stains of our nation's past – stains that cannot be ignored and must be addressed. This legislation seeks to divide our country even more than the right's "Critical Race Theory" strawman does. Our children and our classrooms should be kept out of fights that are purely political in nature. I strongly urge the committee to reject AB411 and AB488.

Sincerely,

Representative Supreme Moore Omokunde
17th Assembly District

17TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Shelia Stubbs
77TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Testimony in Opposition to Assembly Bills 411 & 488

To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education
From: Rep. Shelia Stubbs
Date: August 11, 2011

Chair Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Committee on Education:

I strongly oppose Assembly Bills (ABs) 411 & 488, and I urge all members of the committee to reject these bills.

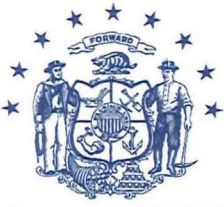
I support equity and inclusion in our classrooms and in our communities. It is essential for all students to thrive. The reality is Wisconsin is the worst state to raise a black family. Wisconsin has been ranked as the worst state in the nation to raise a black child. It is critical that we work against any bills that allow this shameful disparities. The racial disparities that we face in Wisconsin makes it extremely difficult for black families to live and work. AB 411 and AB 488 further increases systemic racism, and division in our classroom. Our student should be taught historical truths.

Prohibiting our teachers from educating our students on the facts of life is simply setting them up for failure. Erasing our racial past and present does not make those events disappear, it just makes for an uneducated and unaware generation of students. There is no reason for us to involve our children's classrooms in political battlefields. I urge the committee to reject AB 411 and AB 488.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shelia Stubbs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rep. Shelia Stubbs
77th Assembly District



Written Testimony of Rep. David Bowen

Assembly Bills 411 and 488

August 11, 2021

Chairman Thiesfeldt, Chairwoman Darling, and members of the Assembly and Senate Committees on Education,

I offer my testimony today on Assembly Bills 411 and 488 under the weight of profound disappointment. Quite simply put, these bills are unnecessary, and they are born out of the drive to divide, rather than unite. The debate surrounding “critical race theory” and whether or not it should be taught in our schools is clearly a baseless attempt to feed the flames of our hyper-partisan culture wars, but it is more than that. Most importantly, it represents a failure by fellow brothers and sisters of our great State to actively listen, and a stubborn unwillingness to truly contend with our past.

America is a great nation, but it is not a nation without blemishes. Ask any person of color in this room or elsewhere, and they will be able to tell you about the discrimination, the hurdles, and the outright racism they or their family members & friends have experienced. Let us not forget that there are individuals alive today who participated in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. There are individuals alive today who grew up under the shadow of Jim Crow. There are individuals alive today who survived internment, forced assimilation, and genocide both here and abroad. And there are individuals alive today whose grandparents were born into slavery in this very country. If anyone tries to tell you that discussions about these issues, these experiences, do not belong in the workplace, they are wrong.

And members of the Committee, let me tell you today that these experiences and these issues *matter*. Learning about them *matters*. Earlier this year, we voted unanimously (and correctly) in both chambers of the Legislature to incorporate lessons on the Holocaust and other genocides into our state curriculum; have we already forgotten that those atrocities were fueled by the very types of both casual and systemic racism we’re discussing today?

Today, I ask you to truly listen to the testimonies before you, and to empathize with the speakers. Emphasize with their lived experiences but recognize what systemic effects have force us all to deal with. I ask you to grapple with the fact that the mistakes of the past, even when we recognize them as mistakes, still rear their heads in the present. I ask you to remember that those who deny their past, who refuse to learn from it, are doomed to repeat it.

Thank you for your time.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE

Dora
DRAKE

Testimony in Opposition to Assembly Bills 411 & 488

To: Members of the Assembly Committee on Education
From: Rep. Drake
Date: August 11, 2021

Chair Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Committee on Education:

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Assembly Bills 411 & 488.

Our teachers and our schools have an incredibly important job of educating our kids. That education begins with teaching our kids how to read, write, add and subtract. It also includes learning about the history of our state, our country, and our planet, so students graduate equipped to understand the context in which they exist in the world.

Unfortunately, there is an effort being made across our nation to stop our schools from taking steps to ensure students and communities who have been ignored, minimized, or left behind in the past have the support and resources they need to receive a solid education, and to stop our schools from teaching history with fullness and completeness. The bills before the committee today are a direct reaction from people who want to further divide us, and prevent any discussion of our country's legacy of slavery, or the ongoing effects of systemic racism. The bills are intended to sow more division, not just among adults, but among kids as well. These bills are about politics, not education.

While parts of history can be uncomfortable, we should never turn away from an honest discussion of the past. If we want our state to be great, we must acknowledge the good, the bad and the ugly truths in order to move forward. The true movement behind bills like AB 411 and 488 is rooted in a familiar strategy of division used throughout our nation's history, which is to undermine our shared goals to promote justice, opportunity, and compassion.

If these were enacted into law, teachers cannot teach how Juneteenth, a celebration of liberation from slavery in 1865 came to be, or how Black Americans won the right to vote. Given how consistently Wisconsin has been ranked as the worst state in the nation to raise a black child, we should be working against bills that aim to maintain that shameful status quo. We should do everything we can to support our kids and our schools, and change that reality.

We must not allow our kids to be used as political pawns, nor our classrooms to be used as political battlefields. I urge the committee to reject ABs 411 and 488.

Respectfully,

Rep. Drake
State Representative
11th Assembly District

**ELEVENTH
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DISTRICT**

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Testimony in Opposition to Assembly Bills 411 & 488

To: Assembly Committee on Education
From: Rep. Gordon Hintz
Date: August 11, 2011

Chair Thiesfeldt and members of the Assembly Committee on Education:

I strongly oppose Assembly Bills (ABs) 411 & 488, which would inject extremism, racism, and division into Wisconsin classrooms.

As state legislators, we all aim to help Wisconsin be a state where people want to live and work. Wisconsin's strong public schools, vibrant communities, and high quality of life are central parts of what attract people to our state.

Unfortunately, the bills before this committee today would do a deep, troubling disservice to our state, by turning our schools into political battlefields and sowing division and disinformation into the work done in the classroom. Rather than ensuring our kids have the resources they need to succeed and educating our students so they grow up to be informed, thoughtful individuals with the ability to think analytically, ABs 411 and 488 would inject racist, extremist fear-mongering into Wisconsin classrooms and turn our kids into political pawns.

Over the past many months, our nation and our state have been undergoing a reckoning about the racist origins of our country and about the continuing impact of those roots in our society today. While our laws and institutions look very different now than at our founding, people in every community still experience the effects of systemic racism. As a state and as a people, we must acknowledge this legacy and work to address continuing wrongs. Ensuring our kids receive an accurate, comprehensive education is critical to doing this work. In the past year, alumni of Oshkosh public schools have spoken out to express support for ensuring current and future students study a more complete understanding of racism and how it has shaped our local, state, and national histories.

Our past and our present are complicated. Indeed, Wisconsin is consistently deemed the worst state in which to raise a black child. As we work to change that reality, let's enact laws that address our challenges, not add new challenges through division and extremism.

Education should be the focus in Wisconsin classrooms, not divisive politically-motivated rhetoric. I urge the committee to reject ABs 411 and 488.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon Hintz".

Rep. Gordon Hintz
54th Assembly District

August 8, 2021

Senator Kelda Roys
Room 3 South
State Capitol
PO Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707
Sen.Roys@legis.wisconsin.gov

Dear Senator Roys:

Wisconsin State Senate Bill 411 (with a companion bill AB414 in the Assembly) was introduced on July 10. Although phrased as race-neutral, it is designed to prevent schools from teaching about the realities of racial oppression over the last 400 years. It would absolve white people of any responsibility for acknowledging or addressing the damage done by previous and continuing unjust treatment of people of color in our society.

As a long-time voting resident of Madison, Wisconsin and a constituent in your district, I am writing to tell you ***I am against SB 411 and asking you to aggressively oppose it in the State Senate.***

The bill proposes to amend State Statutes to create Section 118.018, which would read in part “A school board or the operator of a charter school established under s. 118.40 (2r) or (2x) shall not allow a teacher to teach race or sex stereotyping” and goes on to elaborate various examples of “race or sex stereotyping,” and to place state funding penalties, documentation requirements, and employee training restrictions on the schools and to authorize civil suits against the schools.

This bill is an aggressive and disingenuous push back against advocates who are seeking improvements in our schools to tell the truth about race in this country. It is based on alarmist characterizations of Critical Race Theory, which are neither based on fact nor applicable to the goals of advocates who wish to provide balanced education to our population about the history of race in this country.

Teaching the truth about the history and realities of the early practices of our founders, which enslaved African people in our country is not “race or sex stereotyping.”

Teaching the truth about the history and realities of the early practices of our founders, which committed genocide of the Native American people in our country is not “race or sex stereotyping.”

Teaching the truth about the persistent structural impacts of these past practices is not “race or sex stereotyping.”

The mandates in this bill would teach platitudes to our youth while ignoring and obfuscating the truth of race and sex in our society.

We must teach what our society has actually done. We must teach the truth, not an idealized version of it. Our young people CAN handle the truth!

Our educational system must prepare our youth to thrive in the real world. They must learn to be citizens of a multicultural society and be equipped to understand and work with a diversity of people, cultures and viewpoints. If we fail to do this, we will fail our youth and jeopardize their future.

Education should provide our children with a clear-eyed view of our country's history so they can celebrate our country's greatness but also understand its shortcomings. Our hope is for whites and people of color to work together without blame or rancor to repair the divisions between races, to advance true equality, and to create a fairer and more just world.

Wisconsinites are not afraid of the truth. We want real racial equity for our schools and our state.

Sincerely,

Barbie Jackson, Co-chair MOSES Racial Justice for All Children Task Force
Madison, WI 53719



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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 411/ASSEMBLY BILL 411
SENATE & ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION – JOINT HEARING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2021
JULAIN K. APPLING, PRESIDENT**

Thank you, Chairwoman Darling, Chairman Thiesfeldt and committee members, for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 411 and its companion AB 411. This proposal prohibits anti-racism and anti-sexism pupil instruction and anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees of school districts and independent charter schools.

While the bills do not use the term “Critical Race Theory,” the components the bills address are part of what is commonly and popularly referred to as “Critical Race Theory” or CRT. Thus, we believe it is appropriate to address this topic and use this term as we discuss these bills.

CRT is deeply rooted in Marxism and is one of the biggest threats to fundamentally changing our Republic. Proponents of CRT make race the lens through which we are to view all aspects of American life. CRT views our government and our laws as systemically racist, uses identity politics, which weakens the public and private bonds that serve as a foundation of trust and allow for civic engagement, and seeks to destroy the people’s sovereignty by allowing government to become a dictatorship.

Critical Race Theory, like many movements designed to destroy our Republic, evolved from ivory tower philosopher-academics and has permeated Main Street America, shaping the way we ordinary people think. We are bombarded with dialogue about CRT in social media, in corporate boardrooms, K-12 classrooms, in both public entities and private business diversity training and even in church. Not only has the CRT journey made record time from think tanks to dinner tables, it is gas lighting racial tensions and deepening our divide.

It is important to recognize that CRT holds to the idea that:

1. **There is no absolute truth**—only competing narratives. It sees “lived experiences” as mattering more than facts.
2. **Individuals are either an oppressor or victim.** Individuals are predetermined by immutable characteristics such as race to fall into either category. Culture is defined by groups exercising power over each other.
3. **America is systemically racist and must be dismantled.** It sees America as having been founded on the system of capitalism, which it asserts is racist, and therefore must be disrupted.

True equality will be achieved by maximizing the opportunities for Americans to become self-sufficient, not by dividing Americans on the basis of race and doling out resources based on skin color.

If CRT is implemented in our schools and other institutions, its social policies would continue to erode the key preconditions for advancement—family, education, and work.

Because of the foregoing, we contend the following related to SB 411 and AB 411:

- Curriculum content in Wisconsin schools must not use the goal of teaching diversity of thought as a reason to teach students to view the world through a racial lens, which also much too often requires

students of a certain race to basically apologize for the race they were created as a part of. That should never happen in our schools.

- Curriculum content should use instructional content that creates a shared sense of national identity – America belongs to *all* Americans—and that our nation’s progress is worth celebrating. No student should ever have to assume guilt for something he or she has had absolutely nothing to do with.
- Curriculum content should highlight the foundational principles of our constitution: equality of all humans with equal protection under the law. There should be no place in our schools for so-called equity that grants special rights to some and denies others of the same rights. That promotes racism and discrimination.

Educational institutions, school districts, superintendents and teachers should be champions of rebuilding the institutions of family, education, and the workplace so that all citizens, regardless of skin color, can overcome the barriers to self-sufficiency.

Our educational institutions should be focusing on ways to close the achievement gap between whites and minorities and working to reduce barriers to success by strengthening family and self-sufficiency, especially on the heels of COVID shutdowns.

Heading into the 20-21 school year, students were already behind due to the spring shutdown. According to a study by McKinsey & Company, kindergarten through fifth-grade students only learned 67 percent of the math and 87 percent of the reading that grade-level peers would typically have learned by the fall, citing the Curriculum Associates i-Ready platform.

Yet for schools whose student bodies were made up of more than 50 percent of people of color, those numbers dropped to 59 percent in math and 77 percent in reading. In comparison, schools with more than 50 percent white students learned 69 percent of the math and 90 percent of the reading that their peers typically have learned in a normal school year. As the coronavirus pandemic continues to disrupt schooling across the country, students are falling behind—and none more than Black and Hispanics. This will have long-term, possibly lifetime, implications on their earnings and health for starters.

Fixing these disparities is where our focus should be, not on promoting racism and discrimination by being allowed to teach any of the components of CRT. Senate Bill 411 and Assembly Bill 411 go a long way to keeping the focus in our schools where it should be. We urge you to support the bills in committee and move the bill to the respective floors for full votes.

Thank you for your attention and thoughtful consideration of our position on these bills.



Department of Public Instruction
Statement in Opposition to Senate Bill 411 & Assembly Bill 411
Senate and Assembly Committees on Education

The Department of Public Instruction stands firmly in opposition to Senate Bill 411 and Assembly Bill 411 (SB/AB 411). From rural to urban communities, Wisconsin students deserve the opportunity to become civically-engaged problem-solvers who critically examine their roles in local, regional, state, national, and global communities. Through the study and application of academic disciplines, students have the opportunity to be curious and to think critically in order to become lifelong learners who are able to collaborate, contribute, and thrive in our interdependent world. This understanding can lead to community members who are prepared to shape a Wisconsin that is innovative and prosperous and where everyone belongs.

The Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies, adopted in 2018, were written by Wisconsin educators and vetted by the larger community during public feedback sessions. They represent what Wisconsin values in the study of economics, geography, history, political science, and the behavioral sciences of psychology, sociology, and anthropology. They provide an important foundation to prepare students to become engaged, informed participants who are committed to the ideas and values of our democratic republic and are able to apply the skills of inquiry, collaboration, decision making, and problem solving. SB/AB 411 has the potential to limit students' access to the Wisconsin Standards for Social Studies, which would thereby widen the existing achievement gaps in our education system.

It is unfortunate that today we are not talking about how to innovate and improve teaching and learning. Instead, conversations are consumed by issues that distract and divide our communities, using our public schools as the vehicle. SB/AB 411 presents issues that get nowhere close to supporting our kids or their immediate needs. In fact, nothing about either of these proposals gets anywhere close to a strategy for improving schools. They will not grow relationships between teachers and students, improve instruction, deepen understanding and trust from families, or advance the economic well-being of our communities.

Policy Analysis

Under SB/AB 411, a school board or the operator of an independent charter school is prohibited from allowing a teacher to teach pupils race or sex stereotyping in any course or as part of any curriculum and is prohibited from requiring an employee to attend a training that teaches, advocates, acts upon, or promotes race or sex stereotyping. Among the concepts that are prohibited from being taught under the bill are the following:

- 1) that one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex;



- 2) an individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously;
- 3) an individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment because of the individual's race or sex;
- 4) individuals of one race or sex are not able to and should not attempt to treat others without respect to race or sex;
- 5) an individual's moral character is necessarily determined by the individual's race or sex;
- 6) an individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, bears responsibility for acts committed in the past by other individuals of the same race or sex;
- 7) an individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of the individual's race or sex; and
- 8) systems based on meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist or are created by individuals of a particular race to oppress individuals of another race.

Under the provisions in SB/AB 411, a parent or guardian of a student in a school district may bring an action in circuit court against a school board or operator of a charter school for violating the bill. If the state superintendent determines that a school board or the operator of a charter school has taught or used any of the concepts listed in the bill, the state superintendent shall notify the school board or operator of the violation. After specific timelines detailed in SB/AB 411, if the violation has not been remedied, the state superintendent shall withhold 10 percent of the charter school's state aid distributions.

Finally, under the bill, upon request, a school board or independent charter school operator must provide a printed copy of any curriculum that it is required to post on its Internet site, at no cost to the requester.

Technical Concerns

Beyond the serious concerns that this proposed bill discourages our public schools from having critical discussions around race and sex discrimination with their students and staff; directly contradicting the work of schools in supporting a climate of inclusion for all students based on their race or sex. Additional technical and fiscal concerns exist:

- The bill prohibits teaching which could cause an individual to feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of the individual's race or sex, but does not specify how school boards could monitor or measure such things, causing confusion on how this provision would be applied.

- It is unclear if this would prohibit the instruction required under 1989 Wisconsin Act 31, the requirement to provide instruction on American Indian studies or subsequent similar legislation.
- SB/AB 411 does not specify the means in which the 10% of state aid may be withheld from school districts that violate this bill. There is no timeline specified for how long aid should be withheld or whether the withholding of aid is permanent or temporary.
- The penalties associated with this proposal will disproportionately penalize school communities that rely more heavily on general aid than the tax levy due to lower property value on a per-pupil basis.
- The potential for legal cases arising from implementation of the bill could create significant monetary concerns for schools, which also impacts their ability to operate.
- The requirement for school boards to post all curricula around anti-racism and anti-sexism instruction on the school's internet site may result in copyright infringement concerns; potentially subjecting schools to additional legal expenses.

Conclusion

To be clear, SB/AB 411 will significantly restrict the ability of our school professionals to make decisions about teaching and learning. Our students deserve nothing less than an open environment capable of nourishing intellectual exploration; including an open and honest exchange about our history and how it has shaped the world we live in today. We should be encouraging, not restricting, the ability of our professional educators to have these exchanges in our classrooms so that our students can learn and grow to be adults and leaders who are able to confront the issues of their times.

August 11, 2021

Testimony of ACLU of Wisconsin



Opposed to Senate Bill 411
Senate Committee on Education

Opposed to Assembly Bill 411
Assembly Committee on Education

Chair Darling, Chair Thiesfeldt, and other members of the Committees:

Good Morning. Please include this testimony as a part of the official record. My name is Elisabeth Lambert and I am an attorney and Equal Justice Works Fellow with the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin. The American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin is a non-partisan, non-profit organization working to protect and advance the civil liberties and civil rights of all Wisconsinites. We are strongly opposed to Senate Bill 411 and Assembly Bill 411.

Democracy thrives on, and requires, the robust dissemination of information and ideas. Writing for a plurality of the US Supreme Court in *Board of Education v. Pico*, 457 U.S. 853 (1982)—a case addressing the First Amendment rights of public school students—Justice William Brennan wrote that “the right to receive ideas is a necessary predicate to the *recipient’s* meaningful exercise of his own rights of speech, press, and political freedom.” *Id.* at 887. Here in Wisconsin, we take seriously that a core purpose of our schools is to prepare students for democratic participation. That is why our state legislature has enacted academic standards that require Wisconsin school districts to provide an instructional program designed to give pupils “the skills to participate in political life,” “knowledge of state, national, and world history,” “an appreciation and understanding of different value systems and cultures,” and “at all grade levels, an understanding of human relations, particularly with regard to American Indians, Black Americans and Hispanics.” Wis. Stat. § 118.01(2)(c). In this democracy, it is our strong tradition to respect and support our young people as developing citizens by letting them grapple with complex ideas, competing perspectives, and hard historical truth.

Learning history can indeed be hard. It can be painful. It can cause us to question things we thought we knew and to see the world around us in a new light. *That is why we teach it.* That is why, earlier this spring, this Legislature passed a bipartisan bill requiring Wisconsin schools to incorporate the Holocaust and other genocides into their social studies curricula. Here is what some state legislators had to say about the Holocaust bill at the time they were considering it. Senator Luther Olsen said during the hearing, “What we are saying today . . . is that there’s certain events that were so important in the history of the world that we have to make sure that every generation coming forward knows about those events.” Representative Plumer said, “Ensuring that our children are taught about the atrocities of that period is essential, especially as the number of Holocaust survivors dwindles further every year.” And Senator Darling said “This is not something in the past, this is something in the present. So (this bill) will

be necessary to combat the lack of awareness about the Holocaust among youth.” These are, indeed, compelling reasons to teach the Holocaust. They are the same reasons why it’s essential to teach the hard, unfinished history of racial and gender-based oppression in America.

Senate Bill 411 is a disservice to students and an affront to democratic values. With its vague, wide-ranging list of prohibited concepts, this bill strategically misrepresents historical and social scholarship in order to demonize educators and intimidate them out of teaching complete, complex versions of what the standards require. The bill infantilizes young people—suggesting that they can’t handle the emotional weight of history—while depriving them of opportunities to engage with challenging ideas and competing perspectives, which they need to prepare them for aware, active citizenship.

What is more, by stifling training and discussion of race among school staff, Senate Bill 411 threatens to prolong and compound ongoing racial injustice in this state. Many school districts across the state are grappling with the recognition that they are not providing the same level of educational opportunity to their students of color as they are to their white students, whether that takes the form of racially disproportionate discipline outcomes, hostile environments that make impacted students feel unsafe at school, or entrenched academic achievement gaps. Districts are doing the brave and necessary work of examining and correcting these disparities—as they must, under state and federal civil rights laws. To do this work well requires clear-eyed, uncomfortable discussions of race. To inhibit and punish such discussions, as this Bill will almost certainly do, strips districts of their most essential tools for addressing inequality and consigns students of color to unequal educational opportunity in Wisconsin for another generation.

Wisconsin’s students are our future citizens and leaders. They deserve better than this bill. Our Constitution and our democracy deserve better than this bill. We urge you to not move forward on Senate Bill 411 and Assembly Bill 411.

Kim Kaukl
Executive Director
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Plain, WI 53577
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kimkaukl@wirsas.org



President, Cheryl Gullicksrud
President-Elect, Mike Haynes
Secretary, Jennifer Collins
Treasurer, Robert Smudde
Past President, Chuck Keller

August 11, 2021

Co-Chairs Darling and Thiesfeldt and members of the Senate and Assembly Committees on Education

I am the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA) and I am writing on behalf of Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA) members in opposition to SB 411 and AB 411. Our organization represents 167 rural school districts and supports over 235 total members.

It is our belief that SB 411 and AB 411 are too ambiguous in their language and open to much subjectivity which can be dangerous for a classroom teacher. We also feel these bills go against local control and are an attack on academic freedom. These bills will make it very difficult for our teachers to teach many key events in world and US history and current events. How can you not discuss racism or sexism at some level when discussing the following events, to name just a few?

- The Crusades
- The Civil War
- The 14th Amendment Equal Protection Clause
- World War 2 – Besides Nazi Germany, you had the internment of Japanese
- The Holocaust – (Which many of you on this bill were co-sponsors on SB 69 that recently passed)
- The Civil Rights Movement
- The Tulsa Massacre of 1921
- Apartheid in South Africa
- The teaching of cultural norms
- The teaching of sexuality in Human Growth and Development

Our major concern is that it will be very difficult to effectively teach and engage discussion on many of these events in fear that one might violate the intent of these bills because the language is ambiguous and subjective. These bills may cause teachers to gloss over some very critical events in history. In my opinion, as a former educator in both private and public schools, these bills are very dangerous to the future of our society. It is important for young people to understand the negatives of our past and to also see the positives that have come out of some of these events. Learning from these experiences helps us all grow and build a better society. To limit the teaching of these events will only cause us to continue to make the same mistakes again. I have always carried with me a point my father taught me, and I have shared with my children which is *to own up to your mistakes, learn a lesson from the mistake and go forward to help ensure it doesn't happen again*. If these bills are enacted present and future generations will not see the errors of our past and continue to make the same mistakes instead of having the ability to avoid or correct them from happening in the future.

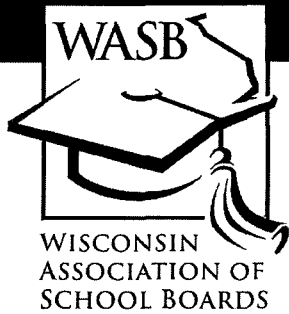
In conclusion, SB 411 and AB 411 may cause more divisiveness in society and be another reason for educators to leave the profession. We need to trust our educators to do what is right and to lead meaningful discussions on crucial issues without fear of repercussions. We ask that you step back and look at these bills from a broader perspective. This country was built on immigration and diversity and that is what initially made this a great country. We ask you oppose SB 411 and AB 411

Thank you for your time and taking my written testimony into consideration.

Kim Kaukl

Kim Kaukl
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Strong Schools, Strong Communities



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JOHN H. ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Members, Senate & Assembly Committees on Education
FROM: Dan Rossmiller, WASB Government Relations Director
DATE: August 10, 2021
RE: OPPOSITION to SENATE BILL 411 & ASSEMBLY BILL 411

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) is a voluntary membership association representing all 421 of Wisconsin's locally elected public school boards. We oppose these bills because they would usurp local school district control of curricular decisions, add unnecessary and unduly burdensome mandates on school boards related to posting instructional materials online and potentially subject school districts to widely differing penalties based not on the nature of the violation but on a district's position in the state's school aid (general equalization aid) formula.

When school districts are coming back from an unprecedented and challenging last school year, we question how these mandates will help schools in their primary mission of educating our students. We need school staff focusing on students and not bureaucracy.

INSTRUCTIONAL & TRAINING MANDATES RE: RACE & GENDER STEREOTYPES

The WASB opposes these provisions based on our state's long history of local control of K-12 education. Our members are elected by their communities to be responsible for approving school district curriculum based on local community input and values and in accordance with state and local academic standards. The assumption in the bill that simply reviewing curricula will inform someone how subject matter is handled in a given classroom by a given teacher seems highly dubious.

We also have concerns about the chilling effect creating a list of 8 non-discussable topics is likely to have on classroom teaching and allowing students to be exposed to history and learn to critically think about uncomfortable topics. Each generation must confront its own set of issues, but it need not confront those issues without a knowledge of how similar issues were addressed in the past. We do students no favors by shielding them from historical events and concepts that are appropriate to their age and grade and level of maturity.

POSTING ALL CURRICULA ON WEBSITE

The WASB opposes this provision because it is unnecessary and burdensome. It is unnecessary because parents already have a legal right under federal law to review these materials. Under that federal law—the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment--all school districts are required to have policies and procedures in place to allow parents access to instructional materials upon request. School districts also have policies and procedures for addressing complaints regarding instructional materials for parents and other community stakeholders.

Based on access rights parents already enjoy, we suspect that these provisions are geared less toward addressing school district resident parents' concerns but are instead geared more toward allowing state and national political organizations to make blanket requests for curricula to use for political purposes or potential lawsuits.

The posting mandate and the accompanying mandate to furnish requestors a printed copy of *any* posted materials free of charge also would require school boards to violate federal copyright law with respect to copyrighted curricula (unless the board went to the expense of purchasing additional copies of the copyrighted curricula for the requestors or gave up current copies of those curricula to the requestors, which would then need to be replaced at additional expense). Wisconsin's Public Records Law properly acknowledges copyright protections and exempts copyrighted material from the definition of "records" subject to disclosure. These bills do not. That is a significant problem.

These posting requirements would be burdensome because many, if not most, Wisconsin school districts **do not** have a staff person who is devoted full-time to managing the district's website. This mandate will likely require school districts to either hire a new staff person solely to comply with these bills or to contract with a private vendor to perform this work at significant new cost either way. The requirement to provide printed copies at no cost to the requester could be similarly financially burdensome both in terms of staff time and the cost of providing copies.

PENALTIES

The WASB also concerned that the bill could subject school districts to punitive sanctions on two fronts:

1) Administrative Sanctions--the potential loss of 10 percent of the district's general aid imposed by the State Superintendent under a procedure that is vague and unclear. This penalty will fall disproportionately more heavily against school districts and communities that are relatively property poorer on a per-pupil basis. Under the school aid formula, some "zero aid" districts could face a penalty of essentially \$0 per pupil while other districts could face a penalty of as much as \$950 per pupil. Further, any aid withheld from a school district would lapse to the state's general fund. If so, money originally intended for education would not benefit a single student.

2) Legal or Court-imposed Sanctions--a potentially high number (practically unlimited) of lawsuits by parents and/or guardians seeking monetary damages—damages that would not be capped at customary \$50,000 limit on awards under current law. In addition, with regard to these lawsuits, the bill also appears to skirt the current law restriction on the award of attorney fees that generally limits such awards to \$500, and instead allows "reasonable" attorney fees and costs.

The WASB is equally concerned that the bill could subject a school district to either or both of these penalties due to actions over which the school board had little or no ability to predict or prevent. What if a disgruntled teacher goes rogue and deliberately defies school board policies and directives and violates the prohibitions in this bill? Under the bill, the teacher—the guilty party who willfully violated the law—would not be penalized, but the school district IS penalized.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns with you. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or would like additional information. I can be reached at drossmiller@wasb.org or (608) 512-1720.



WISCONSIN FAMILY ACTION
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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 411/ASSEMBLY BILL 411
SENATE & ASSEMBLY COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION – JOINT HEARING
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2021
JULAINE K. APPLING, PRESIDENT**

Thank you, Chairwoman Darling, Chairman Thiesfeldt and committee members, for the opportunity to speak in support of SB 411 and its companion AB 411. This proposal prohibits anti-racism and anti-sexism pupil instruction and anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees of school districts and independent charter schools.

While the bills do not use the term “Critical Race Theory,” the components the bills address are part of what is commonly and popularly referred to as “Critical Race Theory” or CRT. Thus, we believe it is appropriate to address this topic and use this term as we discuss these bills.

CRT is deeply rooted in Marxism and is one of the biggest threats to fundamentally changing our Republic. Proponents of CRT make race the lens through which we are to view all aspects of American life. CRT views our government and our laws as systemically racist, uses identity politics, which weakens the public and private bonds that serve as a foundation of trust and allow for civic engagement, and seeks to destroy the people’s sovereignty by allowing government to become a dictatorship.

Critical Race Theory, like many movements designed to destroy our Republic, evolved from ivory tower philosopher-academics and has permeated Main Street America, shaping the way we ordinary people think. We are bombarded with dialogue about CRT in social media, in corporate boardrooms, K-12 classrooms, in both public entities and private business diversity training and even in church. Not only has the CRT journey made record time from think tanks to dinner tables, it is gas lighting racial tensions and deepening our divide.

It is important to recognize that CRT holds to the idea that:

1. **There is no absolute truth**—only competing narratives. It sees “lived experiences” as mattering more than facts.
2. **Individuals are either an oppressor or victim.** Individuals are predetermined by immutable characteristics such as race to fall into either category. Culture is defined by groups exercising power over each other.
3. **America is systemically racist and must be dismantled.** It sees America as having been founded on the system of capitalism, which it asserts is racist, and therefore must be disrupted.

True equality will be achieved by maximizing the opportunities for Americans to become self-sufficient, not by dividing Americans on the basis of race and doling out resources based on skin color.

If CRT is implemented in our schools and other institutions, its social policies would continue to erode the key preconditions for advancement—family, education, and work.

Because of the foregoing, we contend the following related to SB 411 and AB 411:

- Curriculum content in Wisconsin schools must not use the goal of teaching diversity of thought as a reason to teach students to view the world through a racial lens, which also much too often requires

- students of a certain race to basically apologize for the race they were created as a part of. That should never happen in our schools.
- Curriculum content should use instructional content that creates a shared sense of national identity – America belongs to *all* Americans—and that our nation’s progress is worth celebrating. No student should ever have to assume guilt for something he or she has had absolutely nothing to do with.
- Curriculum content should highlight the foundational principles of our constitution: equality of all humans with equal protection under the law. There should be no place in our schools for so-called equity that grants special rights to some and denies others of the same rights. That promotes racism and discrimination.

Educational institutions, school districts, superintendents and teachers should be champions of rebuilding the institutions of family, education, and the workplace so that all citizens, regardless of skin color, can overcome the barriers to self-sufficiency.

Our educational institutions should be focusing on ways to close the achievement gap between whites and minorities and working to reduce barriers to success by strengthening family and self-sufficiency, especially on the heels of COVID shutdowns.

Heading into the 20-21 school year, students were already behind due to the spring shutdown. According to a study by McKinsey & Company, kindergarten through fifth-grade students only learned 67 percent of the math and 87 percent of the reading that grade-level peers would typically have learned by the fall, citing the Curriculum Associates i-Ready platform.

Yet for schools whose student bodies were made up of more than 50 percent of people of color, those numbers dropped to 59 percent in math and 77 percent in reading. In comparison, schools with more than 50 percent white students learned 69 percent of the math and 90 percent of the reading that their peers typically have learned in a normal school year. As the coronavirus pandemic continues to disrupt schooling across the country, students are falling behind—and none more than Black and Hispanics. This will have long-term, possibly lifetime, implications on their earnings and health for starters.

Fixing these disparities is where our focus should be, not on promoting racism and discrimination by being allowed to teach any of the components of CRT. Senate Bill 411 and Assembly Bill 411 go a long way to keeping the focus in our schools where it should be. We urge you to support the bills in committee and move the bill to the respective floors for full votes.

Thank you for your attention and thoughtful consideration of our position on these bills.



School Administrators Alliance

Representing the Interests of Wisconsin School Children

TO: Assembly Committee on Education, Senate Committee on Education
FROM: John Forester, Executive Director
DATE: August 11, 2021
RE: Opposition to AB 411/SB 411

Chairpersons Thiesfeldt and Darling and members of the Assembly and Senate Education Committees, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important legislation. My name is John Forester. I'm the Executive Director of the Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance (SAA). In that capacity, I represent the combined memberships of five professional associations of public school administrators: the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA), the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO), the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA), the Wisconsin Association of School Personnel Administrators (WASPA), and the Wisconsin Council for Administrators of Special Services (WCASS). The SAA also represents the 10,000 members of the Wisconsin Retired Educators Association (WREA).

The SAA, and WREA, opposes Assembly Bill 411/Senate Bill 411, relating to prohibiting the teaching of certain academic content related to sex and race. If adopted, this legislation would:

- Prohibit race or sex stereotyping in 1) instruction provided to pupils in school districts and independent charter schools; and 2) training provided to employees of school boards and independent charter schools. The bill prohibits the teaching of certain academic content related to sex and race.
- Provide that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction must withhold 10 percent of state aid distributions from a school board or operator that violates these prohibitions.
- Provides that a parent/guardian of a student may bring a claim against a school district or operator for violation of the prohibitions.
- Requires each school board and independent charter school operator to post all curricula used in the schools on the district/operator Internet site.
- Upon request and at no cost, a school board or operator must provide a printed copy of any curriculum that it is required to post on its Internet site.

The SAA, and WREA, has the following concerns, reservations, or questions about the proposed legislation:

- The language prohibiting the teaching of certain academic content in the bill is overly broad and ambiguous. The bill, if adopted, would create tremendous uncertainty for social studies teachers on how to teach about human relations, race or sex discrimination, or historical events or movements involving minority populations.
- For many years in Wisconsin, under policymakers of both political stripes, education policy has been developed based on ideology; not on what research says will move the needle for kids. In an attempt to address Wisconsin's stubborn achievement gaps, many school districts have worked for years to make public school curricula more accessible and relevant for students of all races, cultures and socio-economic backgrounds. AB 411/SB 411 threatens to undo this important work by authorizing and encouraging public judgement (based on ideology, not evidence) on instructional content.
- It appears that the proposed 10 percent aid penalty in the bill would impact different school districts in wildly varying degrees, with low property value, highly aided districts suffering a far greater financial penalty than high property value, low aided districts for the same violation under the bill.
- We believe the bill provisions allowing for parents and guardians to sue school boards without following the notice of claims statutes, and without the limitations on the amount recoverable from school boards would clearly promote lawsuits. Therefore, the bill, if adopted, will siphon financial resources away from educational opportunities for children to pay court costs and attorney fees.
- State law requires that school districts "as part of the social studies curriculum, include instruction in the history, culture, and tribal sovereignty of the federally recognized American Indian tribes and bands located in this state at least twice in the elementary grades and at least once in the high school grades." In what ways will the ambiguous language coupled with the invitation for litigation in this bill, if adopted, impact the teaching of these requirements?
- 2021 Wisconsin Act 30 requires the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to incorporate the Holocaust and other genocides into the model academic standards for social studies, and to develop a model curricula and instructional materials for students in grades 5-8 and grades 9-12. Act 30 also requires all public schools, independent charter schools, and private schools participating in the voucher program to provide instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides at least once in grades 5-8, and at least once in grades 9-12. In what ways will AB 411/SB 411, if adopted, impact the curriculum development and instructional requirements in Act 30?
- Please note above that Act 30 applies to private schools participating in the voucher program, but AB 411/SB 411 does not. Why the glaring inconsistency?

- Numerous SAA members, especially superintendents in small school districts, have expressed concerns about the fiscal and administrative burden the curriculum-posting requirements will place on districts. Many smaller school districts do not have an employee devoted full-time to managing the district web site, not to mention the additional administrative burden the bill will place on teaching staff and the need for employee training on the requirements.
- Finally, the SAA and WREA are proud to join the many other organizations that have registered their opposition to AB 411/SB 411 including: Kids Forward, Milwaukee Public Schools, the Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA), the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA), the Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB), the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the Wisconsin Council of Churches, the Wisconsin Democracy Campaign, the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC), and the Wisconsin School Social Workers Association.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you should have any questions regarding our thoughts on AB 411/SB 411, please call me at 608-242-1370.



School of Education
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Senate, Assembly Committee on Education

2021 Senate Bills 411, 463

Anti-racism and anti-sexism pupil instruction and anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees of school districts and independent charter schools

Requiring school boards to make information about learning materials and education activities used for pupil instruction available to the public

August 11, 2021

Chair Darling, Chair Thiesfeldt, and members of the Assembly and Senate Committees on Education:

My name is Diana Hess and I am the dean of the UW-Madison School of Education. Thank you to the committee for the opportunity to provide testimony on Senate Bills 411 and 463. I'm sorry I could not be there in person with you today.

The UW-Madison School of Education takes seriously its commitment to prepare excellent teachers for Wisconsin schools. It is one of the best Education schools in the nation: Our secondary teacher education program currently ranks second in the United States and our elementary teacher education program ranks fourth. Our teacher education programs prepare hundreds of students each year to join the ranks of the professional teaching force. We have recently launched an \$18 million, privately funded program to provide incentives to encourage our teacher education graduates to stay and teach in the state of Wisconsin.

As written, Senate Bill 411 would deprive Wisconsin students of the education they need and deserve, because racism and stereotyping were central causes of some of the most horrendous events in the history of the United States and other nations. To name just a few examples, slavery, genocides, and the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II are realities of our shared history that shape the world today. Teaching history without talking about racism and stereotyping is impossible.

The bill specifically prohibits teaching topics that would make an individual “feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of the individual’s race or sex.” As a former high school teacher, I can attest that teaching history — which is full of glories and horrors — cannot be done effectively without having an impact on students’ emotions. I remember feeling great discomfort when I first learned about the three-fifths compromise that treated enslaved people as less than full humans.

School of Education Office of the Dean

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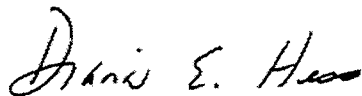
Teachers do not deliberately set out to make students feel bad about themselves. I interact with hundreds of teachers each year and have for decades. The problem this bill seems to identify — that Wisconsin's teachers, intentionally or otherwise, want to make their students feel bad — is simply not real. With all due respect, the bill provides a solution for a problem that doesn't exist. My fear is that if it becomes law, it will have a chilling effect, inhibiting teachers from teaching a full account of history, as well as many contemporary events and issues in our society that are important to gaining a well-rounded education.

Both bills risk creating problems that our already overburdened schools do not need and likely could not be done in a way that is legal. Senate Bill 463 requires posting all learning materials on websites. This would create incredible administrative burdens, be extremely costly, and cause legal problems. Many excellent curriculum materials that schools purchase are copyrighted, and while the purchase allows them to be used in classes, posting materials on websites that are available to the public would be a violation of contracts and copyrights.

Our state has strict requirements for teacher preparation. Consequently, we must treat teachers as professionals with all the rights and responsibilities the term implies. Bills that prevent educators from teaching some of the most important topics in history send the message that teachers do not merit our trust and respect. In a time when many school districts in Wisconsin have a teacher shortage, I fear that these bills could undermine our goal of attracting and retaining teachers.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the impact this legislation would have on teachers across Wisconsin. I strongly encourage you to vote against Senate Bills 411 and 463. If you have any questions, please reach out to me (dhess@wisc.edu or 608-262-6137).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Diana E. Hess".

Diana E. Hess, Ph.D.
Dean, School of Education
Karen A. Falk Distinguished Chair of Education
University of Wisconsin-Madison

LEGAL SUITS AGAINST DISTRICTS

Although these two bills, unlike the other two bills on today's hearing docket, do not authorize lawsuits against school districts for monetary damages, they do permit a school district resident to bring an action in circuit court (for injunctive relief or a writ of mandamus) to compel a school board to comply with the requirements created in these bills. Further, the bill also appears to skirt the current law restriction on the award of attorney fees that generally limits those fees to \$500, and instead specifically directs a court to award up to \$15,000 "reasonable" attorney fees in suits brought under these bills.

All legal actions brought against a school district, whether meritorious or not, must be defended at a cost to the district that may or may not have been budgeted for. That is money that cannot be used for educating children.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns with you. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or would like additional information. I can be reached at drossmiller@wasb.org or (608) 512-1720.



**MILWAUKEE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 10, 2021

Statement by MPS School Board President on Wisconsin Senate Bill 411 • August 11, 2021

The Milwaukee School Board President calls on Wisconsin state legislators to oppose Senate Bill 411. The announcement for the joint Senate and Assembly Education Committee hearing on Wednesday, August 11, 2021, describes the proposed legislation as “relating to: anti-racism and anti-sexism pupil instruction and anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees of school districts and independent charter schools.” In fact, SB 411 seeks to prohibit teaching and staff training on these important matters.

This bill is unnecessary, obstructs teachers’ ability to teach, and harms Wisconsin’s 818,000+ students.

SB 411 is unnecessary. This legislation is a “solution” in search of a problem. There is no evidence that educators are teaching “race and sex stereotyping” or that “an individual, by virtue of the individual’s race or sex is inherently racist, sexist or oppressive....” On the contrary, this bill, and similar legislation in more than two dozen states, is an attempt to weaponize any discussion of racism or sexism in order to silence teachers and to conjure up fear among voters.

SB 411 is an attack on teachers’ ability to teach. Teachers deserve the right to teach the truthful history of our nation’s past and to discuss current events in ways that help students understand the root causes of some of our nation’s most daunting problems. All teachers, regardless of their subject area should have the right to discuss controversial topics, whether historical or current, in developmentally appropriate ways.

The penalties for such teaching are outrageous. For example, a district could potentially lose 10% of general state aid if a teacher teaches about the institutional anti-black violence of the slave system or the dispossession of Native Americans from their lands or the U.S.-Mexican war, through which the U.S. annexed half of Mexico. These are facts of US history. If an MPS teacher taught such truths it would mean the reduction of \$61.3 million in state aid, causing irreparable damage to our students. Other districts could suffer as well: Racine would lose roughly \$16.2 million, Green Bay \$17.6 million, Appleton \$9.6 million, Eau Claire \$6.6 million, and Kenosha \$15 million. Moreover, just the threat of such budget cuts will surely muzzle thousands of teachers throughout the state.

SB 411 would harm Wisconsin’s more than 818,000 students. Wisconsin’s students deserve to have teachers who teach history accurately and teachers unafraid to discuss controversial topics with their students in developmentally appropriate ways. We should not underestimate our students. They follow current events. They participate in political debates and are leading organizations and movements that address many of our nation’s most entrenched problems. To close off schools as a location where students can discuss, debate, and investigate such issues would be a travesty to our students and would discourage their interest in participating in civil society.

I call on legislators to oppose SB 411. We will continue to defend the right of teachers to teach, and the right of students to learn, the true history of our nation.

Start. Stay. Succeed.
Comienza. Quédate. Triunfa.

Senate Bill 411 Testimony

Submitted by:

Jamie Murray-Branch, MA,CCC-SLP

Clinical Faculty Emeritus

Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

UW Madison Teaching Academy (Member)

African-American/Jewish Friendship Group, Inc.

(Education Committee Member)

My name is Jamie Murray-Branch. I am a Clinical Faculty Emeritus member of the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders and a UW Madison Teaching Academy inductee. My clinical area of expertise is in speech and language development in children from high risk populations including those living in poverty and I specialize in communication intervention for adults and children with complex communication disorders who have limited to no speaking capabilities.

I will not be in Madison during the hearing to discuss Senate Bill 411 on Wednesday, August 11th, so I am writing to express my opposition of Senate Bill 411. As an African-American woman, educator, clinician and researcher, I am keenly aware of how historical events have shaped our lives. That knowledge provides United

States citizens with a fuller understanding of who we are as individuals and as a people, and how those who came before us through their struggles, triumphs and perseverance have made our world and our lives better. For this reason, the committee I serve on, the African-American/Jewish Friendship Group, Inc. Education Committee, has worked diligently over the past year with State Representative LaKeshia Myers, of Milwaukee, in drafting and advocating for the bill, LRB, 0402, The African-American History Education Act. LRB, 0402, The African-American History Education Act, supports the development of an accurate, integrative and comprehensive model social studies history curriculum with a specific focus on the critical role African-Americans played in our country's development. As of now, we have we have garnered support from 31 State Representatives and 10 State Senators, all Democrats, and it is our sincere desire to obtain bi-partisan support for this initiative.

Despite the complex make-up of our country's citizenry, educational research reveals that many of our current social studies and history materials including textbooks present U.S. History primarily from a Eurocentric and male dominant perspective (Banks, J.A. 2001).

There are major omissions in our current social studies and history curricula that result in students graduating from high school unaware of the central role African Americans, their experiences and contributions, have played in shaping our nation. Why is this happening? The simple answer is because this content is not taught in our social studies and history classes.

Currently, information regarding the African American experience in our nation's history is shared during one month of the year, February, Black History Month, and the breadth and depth of the instruction varies from classroom to classroom. This Additive approach to teaching African-American history fails on two critical levels:

First, information continues to be presented from the perspective of mainstream historians and thus contains a Euro-Centric focus and perspectives and

Second, the curriculum fails to help students understand how the histories and cultures of the nation's diverse ethnic groups are inextricably interwoven.

It is the intersectionality of the various ethnic, cultural and religious groups that is key to understanding our nation's history and current conditions.

Proponents of bills like Senate Bill 411 are using the phrase "critical race theory" to dictate what teachers say and block children from learning the shared stories of confronting injustice to build a more perfect union.

"A lie is always more of a threat than the truth, even when the truth is painful," says Kevin Welner, Professor of Education at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and Director of the National Education Policy Center. "Our children need to understand the painful truth of racism."

Wisconsin teachers (those in training as well as those currently teaching in the classroom) have a desire to convey our country's comprehensive history in a developmentally appropriate manner that is informative, not punitive. To date, our committee has provided numerous vetted resources to DPI to meet this need and DPI consultants report teachers requests for more comprehensive resources.

Armed with essential knowledge regarding our country's history, Wisconsin public school students will graduate with the essential knowledge and skills that will prepare them to work and live in our racially and culturally diverse world. Fortified with this knowledge, they will be able create an equitable and just society.

I strongly believe that a teaching model and pedagogical tools that support a comprehensive and accurate review of our nation's history will enhance the psycho-social development of all students. This model will pave the way for schools to integrate important curricular content related to other diverse groups and their respective histories, so that students graduate understanding the interrelationships between various groups and how U.S. citizens have worked as a collective to create the nation we have today.

Data collected from some of the 14 states that have already adopted more inclusive history teaching models described an improvement in the "learning climate" in their schools. It is also noteworthy, a decline was recorded in the academic achievement gaps between Black and white students in key academic areas, reading and mathematics, in multiple states where a more inclusive and comprehensive social studies curriculum was adopted.

Representative Marcia Fudge of Ohio, who is now serving as our current Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Representative Fudge stated that "African Americans have helped build this country's economy, discovered and explored new territories, settled and

kept peace in the West, and invented and improved so many things we take for granted today, like the traffic light and blood transfusions. We have proudly fought and died in every war, served on the U.S. Supreme Court, and one of us was elected as the nation's 44th President. But many of our contributions to America's history are not known or understood by most Americans, because they are simply not taught in our schools."

Black history is U.S. history. Support of Senate Bill 411 impedes the teaching integrated and comprehensive U.S. History to the detriment of all students and our nation. I implore this governing body to refuse to inhibit our students' learning and the achievement of their maximum abilities through the passage of this bill.

Sincerely,

Jamie Murray-Branch, MA,CCC-SLP

Clinical Faculty Emeritus

Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders

UW-Madison Teaching Academy (Member)

African-American/Jewish Friendship Group, Inc.,

Education Committee (Member)

Thank you Chairman Thiesfeldt and Chairwoman Darling for today's hearing. My name is Alyssa Pollow. I am a resident of the Germantown school district, mother to two young children and I am testifying in support of SB 463 and 411. Many parents are learning that some of our educators are not focused on objective academics, but instead are using classroom time and school resources to push harmful political agendas. Superintendents and directors of education have failed to provide appropriate oversight or notification of politically charged curriculum and in-service training for our teachers. We need transparency in our schools.

Obtaining detailed information about these issues has not been easy. We have been told by district leaders that our requests for information are too vague and broad, that we need to define our terms better, despite the constantly shifting language in certain ideologies. We have been told that we need to directly contact the principal of the school for in-service materials because the district administration couldn't provide them. We experience superintendents playing games of semantics and pretending to not know what we are asking for, in efforts to delay disclosing the information to parents who are concerned about their children's education.

In my district the director of education held a teacher in-service focused around Culturally Responsive Frameworks and encouraged teachers to read *Me and White Supremacy*. The discussion guide for this in-service referenced work from Peggy McIntosh and Robin DiAngelo. The goals of this in-service were 1). Identify and learn about the multiple identities and how they intersect (which is Kimberle Crenshaw's Intersectionality theory), 2). Become aware of who may be left out of advocacy work in schools; and 3). Challenge barriers and create solutions using an intersectional framework (again, referencing Crenshaw's work on intersectionality). Our director of education attempted to hire the Ubuntu Research and Evaluation group to conduct this in-service, and has encouraged staff to buy books from SocialJusticeBooks.org. These books teach students to become activists and agitators. Additional emails have shown encouragement for Ibram X Kendi's books, *Stamped from the Beginning* and *How to Be An Anti-Racist*.

A principal at one of our elementary schools spent time at multiple teacher in-services to focus on explicitly political agendas including: Gender and Privilege, Disability and Privilege, Privilege and Legal Structures, Identity and Personality, Socioeconomic Status and Privilege, Culturally Responsive Classrooms, and Privilege, Intersectionality and Positionality. Is privilege really the most pressing issue facing this elementary school and our district? Mind you, this is happening in the midst of a pandemic, when the psychological and emotional well-being of students and teachers is fragile, and the academic achievements of many were falling behind. In additional emails we have found discussions about incorporating culturally relevant problem solving in math, and further references to materials such as *Courageous Conversations About Race*, *Integrated Comprehensive Systems*, *Teaching Tolerance*, *Anti-racist Teaching*, *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*, and *Abolitionist Teaching*.

If this is the material that is being leveraged against our teachers and staff to change the way they teach, there is no doubt it will change the way curriculum is delivered and interpreted by

our students, our children. Transparency is needed in all facets of our K-12 education: classroom textbooks and supplemental materials, homework assignments, reading lists, library content, and teacher in-services. The faith and trust that parents have put into their school districts is broken, and we feel our students have been taken advantage of, and a quality education has been stolen from them. We should be teaching our children to elevate gratitude over grievance, optimism over pessimism, forgiveness over resentment, understanding over ignorance and honest diversity over conformity.

Thank you for your time and concern.

Alyssa Pollow
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Germantown, WI 53022
262-424-7614
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WISCONSIN COUNCIL
OF CHURCHES
COURAGE. JUSTICE. HOLY IMAGINATION.

30 W. Mifflin, Suite 602
Madison, WI 53703

To: Sen. Alberta Darling, Senate Education Committee Chair
Rep. Jeremy Thiesfeldt, Assembly Education Committee Chair

From: Peter Bakken, Coordinator for Justice and Witness, Wisconsin Council of Churches

Date: August 11, 2021

Re: Testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 411

On behalf of the Wisconsin Council of Churches, I ask you to vote against Senate bill 411 relating to anti-racism and anti-sexism pupil instruction.

Earlier this year, the Legislature passed, with strong bipartisan support, Senate Bill 69 requiring instruction on the Holocaust and other genocides as part of the state social studies standards. The reason for that legislation was clear: collective amnesia is deadly. Students need to know the history of such unthinkably horrible events so that they will not be repeated. They need to understand how racism and bigotry find a home not only in individual human hearts, but also in laws and national policies. They need to realize that the past is never wholly past, that history lays on us moral responsibilities we would rather not bear, but that we dare not refuse. And we need to teach them that they can face those truths. They can shoulder those responsibilities.

That is why the provisions in Senate Bill 411 are so harmful.

While the bill purports to prohibit stereotyping in public classrooms, its shallow understanding of racism and sexism ensures that students will never grapple with these realities in a way that will make it possible to really uproot them. As the Wisconsin Council of Churches statement on Institutional Racism and Racial Justice (2011) states,

Institutional racism ... is measured not by personal attitudes, but by effects. By definition, institutional racism in the U.S. is the sum of policies, practices, and attitudes within an institution, government, corporation, or group that perpetuates the position of power and privilege for members of the white race. Originally these policies, practices, and attitudes were likely to be intentional. Now, however, they may not be consciously chosen. They have been a part of the status quo long enough that they have become invisible to those who benefit from them.

Examples given in the statement include the discriminatory implementation of the G.I. Bill after World War II, the exclusion of farm workers and domestics from the Social Security Act during the New Deal Era, the Federal Housing Act, and urban renewal and highway programs. The statement acknowledges that the Christian churches have long played a role in supporting racist and discriminatory policies and practices, including the dispossession and exploitation of this land's original inhabitants and the buying and selling and enslavement of Africans.¹

The purpose of teaching these things is not to make any students feel guilty or morally inferior. The purpose is to help them to recognize and take responsibility for how their words, actions, and assumptions can be hurtful to others of different backgrounds and experiences. The purpose is to help them be better Americans, who not only take pride in their country's past achievements, but also recognize its failures and work to undo the harmful legacies that keep us from realizing the promise of liberty and justice for all.

The bill's approach to punishing schools for supposed violations of its prohibitions is heavy-handed, encouraging litigation and threatening funding cuts that will hurt all of a school's students. Parents already have better and more constructive ways to address concerns they may have with a teacher's lesson plans, and the requirement to publicly post curricula is an open invitation to intimidation by anyone with an axe to grind. These provisions will have a chilling effect on teacher's efforts to present honest history and to lead open and informed discussions of racism and sexism.

We want our children to grow up strong, and honest and courageous. We will not do that by hiding from them the truth that hurts or by misrepresenting the efforts of the teachers and community leaders who seek to tell the truth. We need our children to be able to carry on the work of truth-telling, so that our communities, our state, and our nation can become what, in our very best moments, we have aspired to be.

I therefore urge you to reject Senate Bill 411.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

The Wisconsin Council of Churches is a network of Christian churches and faith-based organizations committed to working together across our many differences. Exercising holy imagination, we help one another make courageous choices that lead toward peacemaking, social and economic justice for Wisconsin's most vulnerable residents, the vitality of the church, and the well-being of our neighbors. The Council connects 20 Christian traditions, which have within them approximately 2,000 congregations and over one million church members. We pray and work together for the unity and renewal of the church and the healing and reconciliation of the world.

⁴Wisconsin Council of Churches, "Statement on Institutional Racism and Racial Justice," November 2011.

<https://wichurches.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/StatementonInstitutionalRacismandRacialJustice.pdf>

I would like to thank Senator Darling, Representative Thiesfeldt, and the other members of this Joint Public Hearing for the opportunity to speak **in opposition** to Senate Bill 411.

My children both graduated from Wisconsin public schools, and my youngest is currently enrolled at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. I have been a lifelong supporter of public education.

As a statute, SB411 is unnecessary – and in some cases contradicts – existing The Wisconsin Educator Standards. I have included specific standards in my written testimony. Further, Wisconsin State Statutes Section 118.001 and Chapter 120, already codify the role of a local school board, elected by members of the school district, in overseeing school district programs. “Adverse treatment” or judgment on “moral character” based on an “individual’s race or sex,” (c.f. sections 1(c) and 1(d)) are areas of discrimination already prohibited by federal laws.

I would like to specifically address section 1(g) of SB411, which attempts to legislate the emotional response of students to curriculum. This is not possible nor is it the role of the Wisconsin State Legislature to determine what may cause an emotional response or what that response might be.

The truth about ourselves may cause discomfort.

If my physician tells me I must lose weight to protect my health, I might feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or another form of psychological distress. I may also feel thankful, encouraged, or motivated to lose the weight. Regardless of my response, the physician spoke a truth I needed to hear.

The truth is that harm has been done by the United States against People of Color. It is also true that those who enacted these laws were predominantly people of a certain race or sex. Teaching these historical truths does not inherently stereotype or place blame.

It’s possible my two White male children could have been made uncomfortable by these truths. However, years of public-school instruction taught them to be critical thinkers, able to evaluate the past and reflect on the present. Having read literature in their ELA classes by those of diverse social locations, as well as the empathy learned at home and in church, they had the skills allowing them to consider life experiences that are not their own.

Because they were taught the truth in school, they were already in appropriate space to ask questions and process their reactions. And if the classroom did not provide enough resources, their family was available to do so.

I ask that the Senate and Assembly Committees on Education **withdraw** this bill and for my representatives, Senator Darling and Representative Knodl, to **withdraw** their support.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Rev. Michelle Henrichs
10109 N. Hunt Club Circle | Mequon, WI 53097
August 11, 2021

Appendix to Written Testimony

Specific existing Wisconsin Educator Standards that define best professional practice for teachers, administrators, and other professionals involved in pupil services the negate the necessity of SB411. Specifically:

- **Learning Environments.** The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation. (T3)
- **Content Knowledge.** The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of each discipline he or she teaches. The teacher creates learning experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful for pupils to assure mastery of the content. (T4)
- **Professional Learning and Ethical Practice.** The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning. The teacher uses evidence to continuously evaluate the teacher's practice, including the effects of the teacher's choices and actions on pupils, their families, other educators, and the community. The teacher adapts the teacher's practice to meet the needs of each pupil. (T9)
- **Equity and Cultural Responsiveness.** Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each pupil's academic success and well-being. (A3)
- **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.** Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each pupil's academic success and well-being. (A4)
- **Care and Support.** Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community to promote each pupil's academic success and well-being. (A5)
- The pupil services professional understands the complexities of learning and knowledge of comprehensive, coordinated practice strategies that support pupil learning, health, safety, and development. (PS2)

Source: <https://dpi.wi.gov/licensing/programs/educator-standards>

Further, Wisconsin State Statutes Section 118.001 and Chapter 120, already codify the role of a local school board, elected by members of the school district, in overseeing school district programs. "Adverse treatment" or judgment on "moral character" based on an "individual's race or sex," (c.f. sections 1(c) and 1(d)) are areas of discrimination already prohibited by federal laws.

Myers, LaKeshia

From: Rep.Myers
Sent: Wednesday, August 11, 2021 9:54 AM
To: Myers, LaKeshia; summit.legis@gmail.com
Subject: FW: Oppose Senate Bill 411

From: Kelly Martin <kellymartin.kmm@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 11:40 PM
To: Sen.Larson <Sen.Larson@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Sen.Johnson <Sen.Johnson@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Myers <Rep.Myers@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Cc: Rep.Thiesfeldt <Rep.Thiesfeldt@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Kitchens <Rep.Kitchens@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Wittke <Rep.Wittke@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Ramthun <Rep.Ramthun@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Wichgers <Rep.Wichgers@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Mursau <Rep.Mursau@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Duchow <Rep.Duchow@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Rozar <Rep.Rozar@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Penterman <Rep.Penterman@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Pope <Rep.Pope@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Hebl <Rep.Hebl@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Considine <Rep.Considine@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Vruwink <Rep.Vruwink@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Sen.Darling <Sen.Darling@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Sen.Bernier <Sen.Bernier@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Sen.Nass <Sen.Nass@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Sen.Jagler <Sen.Jagler@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Sen.Smith <Sen.Smith@legis.wisconsin.gov>
Subject: Oppose Senate Bill 411

Hello,

As a resident of Milwaukee WI, and as a childhood development professional, I urge you to oppose Senate Bill 411.

This bill would prevent critical, healing conversations from happening in our education system, to the detriment of students, staff, and all communities in our state. Continuing to repress and deny the demonstrable racism and sexism -- in schools and in society at large -- is a tone-deaf and ineffective strategy for this present moment of racial reckoning, as well as for the longer-term development of our society.

We have to name it to tame it. We must feel it to heal it.

Research shows that discussing race with children is associated with lower levels of discrimination and stereotyping (<https://www.racepride.pitt.edu/research/>). Claims that these conversations divide us are not true; people may feel uncomfortable facing hard truths about our country, but that discomfort is where learning, growth, and healing can happen.

Thank you for your time and your service to the state of Wisconsin. Our students are depending on you to do the right thing! Oppose Senate Bill 411 and stand on the right side of history.

Sincerely,
Kelly Martin, M.S
Director of Impact, Alliance for Strong Families and Communities

August 10, 2021

Testimony of the National Lawyers Guild Milwaukee Chapter
In Opposition to Assembly Bill 411 and Senate Bill 411
In front of the joint hearing of the Assembly and Senate Education Committees

Dear Chair Darling, Chair Thiesfeldt, and members of both committees,

We write to oppose Assembly Bill and Senate Bill 411. No one favors teaching stereotypes based on race or sex, and it would be inappropriate to give racist or sexist ideas a platform in our schoolrooms, but this is not what the bill is seeking to suppress. The concepts disallowed in the bill would create a slippery slope that would place many restrictions on the honest efforts of teachers to engage students in a thoughtful way in our country's history.

There is voluminous scholarship highlighting that throughout human and U.S. history, race, class, and sex are key indicators of power - whether political, social or economic. For example, if a state legislature, made up of mostly white men, attempts to control education and instruction, they will do so with their worldview in mind. Absent input from a wide community of educators, diverse in their race, class, and sex, this bill amounts to political fascism. In the panoply of curricular and pedagogical approaches, academic and scientific rigor determine what teachings are most accurate, not the uninformed or misinformed opinions of elected officials.

The intent of these bills is broadly to protect white men's feelings, and it seems likely that the stereotypes that would be challenged under this potential framework are those that identify inequities in the systems that benefit white people and say that America isn't a strict meritocracy - that white privilege exists and institutional and structural racism also exist. These decisions would specifically put the feelings and concerns of white men above those from women and students of color. The bill creates a scenario in which teachers delivering education about inequality in the past and its relationship to inequality in the present accused of participating in "reverse discrimination" because it would make white students feel bad (and would be prohibited by these bills). As society has moved away from the 'colorblind' ideas of the 80s and 90s, we have recognized that people have different experiences of the world that are influenced by their race, class or gender and to ignore those is to not treat people as fully human. 12(d) seems to suggest we go back to this 'colorblind' ideal, which we have grown past.

It is important for scientists and lay people to identify how circumstances and people are impacted by their environment. To pretend that historical and contemporary injustices are not open to honest, rigorous critique is a gross embrace of fiction and make believe. This bill seeks to create legislation that expensively forces schools across our state to onerously post curricula, and then open themselves up to frivolous and random attacks by the public based on uninformed opinions. This is dangerous to our education system and the healthy social development of our children. Creating this unjust and unfunded mandate will also allow the

government to withhold ten percent of the school system's budget without outlining even the broadest of processes to investigate or guide these threatened cuts. It offends both in its content and the integrity of the policymaking process.

This bill is a thinly veiled effort to intimidate educators, and expose them to lawsuits by people not informed enough to know what should be taught and how. The bill is not seeking to suppress the teaching of racism and sexism. This legislation is not necessary, helpful, or thoughtful, so please vote no on AB/SB 411. Thank you.

Testimony before Wisconsin State Senate and Wisconsin State Assembly Education Committees
August 11, 2021

SPEAKING IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 411 AND ASSEMBLY BILL 411

Submitted by : Eva Hagenhofer
470 W. Willow Court, Fox Point, Wisconsin

I was born ten years after my Chicago born father, son of immigrants, joined the U.S. Army to fight against German fascism and three years after he met and married my German mother. The GI Bill brought them together in a Swiss art school.

His stories were the stuff of adventure and camaraderie while fighting the good fight. We seldom heard our mothers' stories and, from her silence, understood that she was ashamed of her homeland. It would have been better to talk and learn.

Nonetheless, at this time of year she baked pflaumenkuchen and at Christmas we had big boxes of lebkuchen straight from Stuttgart. After school, Mama made us tall glasses of himbersaft and the price of weisswurst was kind to any budget. There was a dirndl in my closet and a lodencoat for winter. Kate Küsse was my favorite doll; like her I had blond braids and, in ways I can't explain, felt my Mother's shame.... I wanted to know the story I hadn't been told and eventually learned that there had been "good Germans," brave men and women who rescued and hid persecuted Jews, Gypsies, and Homosexuals. Shame turned to pride.

What's the lesson? History is many-sided, many layered, complex. There's the stuff that makes us cringe and the stuff that makes us more connected, more human. If we ignore one side, we diminish the other.

DPI standards mandate that Wisconsin's 3rd – 5th graders learn about the history of our state so that they can "connect past events, people, and ideas to the present; use different perspectives to draw conclusions; and suggest current implications". As they do, they should learn that in 1854 abolitionism was a founding principle of the Republican Party and that in that same year Racine Presbyterians rescued Joshua Glover, a runaway slave, and that the citizens of Waukesha received and protected him before absconding him to safety in Canada.

But how can this part of our history be learned without also learning about chattel slavery which allowed white traders to steal Africans from their homes and white landowners to buy and sell these men and women, who earned no wages and were seen as nothing more than farm equipment?

In 1991, the Wisconsin legislature signed Act 31 into law, mandating the teaching of Wisconsin and Native American History and affirming that it is the schools' responsibility to educate in order to dismantle

"the racism and general ignorance around tribal sovereignty and treaty rights of Wisconsin's Indian nations.... that all public school districts provide instruction in the history, sovereignty, and culture of the 11 federally-recognized tribes and bands in Wisconsin and that this must be included in the curriculum at least twice during

the elementary years and once in high school..... [and that] Wisconsin teachers must also be instructed on these topics to acquire their teaching licenses."

But how can the history of our First Nation people be learned without also being taught about their forced expulsion and displacement from eastern lands? And how can our students understand the existence of reservations without also learning about the U.S. government policies of Manifest Destiny and the Homestead Act which gave Indian land to white Europeans (like my grandparents) ?

Commendably, this legislature recently passed the Holocaust Education Bill in an attempt to correct the widespread ignorance and denial of the Nazi regime's genocidal ambitions which ultimately killed more than 6 million Jews and half (250,000 – 500,000) of 1 million European Romani/Gypsies .

But how do teachers meet the mandates of this new law, which instructs teachers to teach students (in age appropriate ways) about how Hitler and the machine of the Third Reich first took away the citizenship and employment, then homes and possessions, and finally the lives of its victims because it sought a supreme, pure Aryan race?

Senate Bill 411 and Assembly Bill 411 are mistakenly motivated by fear and mistrust of (1) teachers' ability to teach in fair and balanced ways and (2) students' curiosity about and ability to handle the truth, denying them the opportunity to learn, think, grow, and enter our pluralistic democracy with the understanding, ability, and willingness to defend it. By limiting classroom learning and discussion about the official and individual acts of racial oppression which have stained our history over the last 400 years, they also undermine DPI standards that stress the teaching of critical thinking.

By prohibiting "teaching[which would cause] "individuals to feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any form of psychological distress because of his or her race or sex," (section 1g) these Bills not only dismiss the feelings of students of color whose history is regularly minimized or dismissed in schools, by avoiding the discomfort that educates, they commit lies of omission. If we decline to teach them the truth, our students will eventually learn on their own and we will have miseducated them.

This proudly abolitionist state, once a national leader in education, must teach and uphold our nation's full, accurate, and unflinching history so that **our children can learn about how our nation has, from its founding, betrayed the ideals of its birth and, in classrooms that embrace all children, grapple with their underlying causes in order to create a "more perfect union."** I implore you to reject the wording and sentiment of SB411 and AB411 . These Bills, crafted and promoted by organizations outside of Wisconsin, do not represent who we are. We are badgers ... we might blink at the bright light of truth, but we don't flinch.

Good morning everyone

My name is Elli Bowen and I represent the group Mission Six Forever (MSF) a group of approximately 50 members. We are a conservative but diverse group and are concerned about a number of issue including the subject addressed by bill 411. This bill prohibits race or sex stereotyping in 1) instruction provided to pupils in school districts and independent charter schools; and 2) training provided to employees of school boards and independent charter schools. It also provides guidance for what happens if race or sex stereotyping is taught to students and employees of school boards and independent charter schools. It is a step in the right direction to be sure. However, one concern I have that I am not sure is addressed in this bill is the concept that there are more than two sexes other than (male and female), and the issue of homosexuality, bisexual, cross dressing, transgender, transsexual and transvestites.

For instance: Transgender and transsexual are commonly confused terms that both refer to gender identity. Transgender is a broader, more inclusive category that includes all individuals who do not identify with the gender that corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth. Transsexual is a more narrow category that includes individuals who desire to physically transition to the sex that corresponds with the gender with which they identify. (Note that the word "gender" is usually used to refer to social and cultural roles, while "sex" refers to physical attributes.)

All transsexual persons are transgender. However, not all transgender persons are transsexual. Transgender women are sometimes referred to as trans women. Some may also be known as male-to-female transsexuals, MTFs, transsexual women, transgirls, or tgirls. The term "transsexual" originated as a medical term and is sometimes considered pejorative. It is always best to ask a person which term is preferred.

Transgender vs. Transsexual

Although they both refer to gender identity, transgender and transsexual are terms with distinct meanings. That they are often used interchangeably has led to some confusion. In most cases, a transgender woman is a woman who was designated (also commonly referred to as "assigned") male at birth but who identifies as a woman. Some transgender women may use the term AMAB (assigned male at birth) in describing their identity. She may take

steps to transition, but these steps do not necessarily involve surgery or physical alterations. She may dress as a woman, refer to herself as a woman, or use a feminine name. (Note that some trans men may use the term AFAB, or assigned female at birth.)

Not all transgender persons, however, identify with the man/woman, masculine/feminine binary. Some identify as gender nonconforming, nonbinary, genderqueer, androgynous, or "third gender." For this reason, it is important never to assume that a transgender person identifies with a particular gender nor to assume what pronouns a person uses.

Transitioning

A transsexual woman is one who desires to physically transition to the sex that corresponds with the gender with which she identifies. Transitioning often includes taking hormones to suppress the physical characteristics of her assigned gender. Many transsexual women in the U.S. take hormone supplements, which can promote breast growth, change vocal pitch, and contribute in other ways to a more traditionally feminine appearance. A transsexual might even undergo gender reassignment surgery (also referred to as "gender confirmation surgery" or "gender affirming surgery"), where the anatomical features of the gender and sex assigned at birth are physically altered or removed.

Strictly speaking, there's no such thing as a "sex change operation." A woman can elect to have cosmetic surgeries done to alter her physical appearance to match conventional norms associated with the gender with which she identifies, but anyone can have these procedures done, regardless of their gender identity. These surgeries are not limited to transsexual people.

Gender Identity vs. Sexual Orientation

Gender identity is often confused with sexual orientation. The latter, however, refers only to a person's "enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people" and is not related to gender identity. A transgender woman, for example, may be attracted to women, men, both, or neither and this orientation has no bearing on her gender identity. She may identify as gay or lesbian, straight, bisexual, asexual, or may not name her orientation at all.

Transgender vs. Transvestite

Transgender women are often incorrectly identified as "transvestites." A transvestite, however, is an individual who wears clothing primarily associated with the gender with whom he or she does *not* identify. A man may prefer to dress as a woman, but this does not make him transgender if he does not identify as a woman.

Is anyone confused yet ? I sure am, and imagine what the children must feel like. These specific subjects need to remain within the family structure of the child's home. This only confuses children. Pushing in one direction or another for a child to question their sexual orientation or being when their minds are still trying to grasp how the world basically works is insanity. I don't know if the bill addresses this issue and I believe it should.

Thank you for your time regarding this subject and allowing me to address you today.

The proposed legislation before us prohibits race- and sex- stereotyping in public and charter schools. The “race” part of that is what “Critical Race Theory” is all about; this presentation will briefly address that specific matter.

Many Wisconsin Schools are either on the verge of installing “Critical Race Theory” (CRT) as part of grade-, middle-, and high-school curricula, or have already done so. Although it goes under many names using terms like “Inclusive,” “Anti-Racist”, “Equity”, “Cultural competency”, and other benign-sounding appellations, it is offensive to both American principles and academic rigor.

While it pretends to abrogate racism, it does precisely the opposite by declaring that there are only two kinds of people in America: the oppressed and the oppressor, which are respectively blacks and whites. This is a reduction to the absurd; in previous incarnations, the same Hegelian analytical method spoke of “classes” instead of “races,” or of “men” as oppressors with “women” being victims. (It is also legitimate to ask: “What happened to people of Hispanic, Oriental, or sub-continental Indian descent?”)

The current fad, CRT, denies individual responsibility for racism AND denies one’s agency and ability to escape from ‘oppression.’ Individual responsibility for racism is swallowed into “institutional”, “systemic”, or “structural” racism (identified with “whiteness,”) and it implies that blacks are incapable of rising above those restraints.

If you can answer the question “How high is up?” you may be able to determine the end-point of CRT’s usefulness. There is no quantifiable measure for “systemic” or “structural” racism—thus, the goal posts can be moved at the whim of those who are assaulting your children and you with this curriculum.

Nonetheless, CRT proposes a remedy called “equity.” Equity is NOT equality, which was enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and ratified emphatically in the Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1964, not to mention the 14th and 15th Amendment to the Constitution. “Equity” calls for equality of RESULTS—that is, all people should have the same school grades, homes, cars, bank accounts, and investments. Exactly the same. We’re told that this is the optimum objective for American society. Unmentioned? It didn’t work when Stalin tried it, it failed in Cuba, and it’s about to crash in Venezuela, too.

Frankly, pushing a blatantly racist narrative into your children by teaching them that if they are white, they are oppressors and if they are black, they are helpless victims is morally repulsive, as Glenn Loury stated in his June 5th lecture at Pepperdine.

All of us who are honest recognize that American society is one which can be improved. All of us who are honest also recognize that America has imposed improvement upon itself, at great pain, since its founding in 1776.

And all of us who are honest want an American society which lives by the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, where we are judged NOT by the color of our skin but by the content of our character. THIS is what Wisconsin educators should strive to teach and what our children should learn.

Sincerely,

Lawrence A Stich

N25W24129 River Park Ct.

Pewaukee WI 53072



Wisconsin School Social Workers Association

WISCONSIN SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATION STATEMENT IN OPPOSITION TO BILL 411

As school social work professionals, we are guided by a set of principles that govern our practice in the school setting. These principles are reflected in the Wisconsin School Social Work standards and governed by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. WSSWA believes this bill would compromise our standard to provide the highest quality of services to students and families.

Under the bill, a school board or the operator of an independent charter school is prohibited from allowing a teacher to teach pupils race or sex stereotyping in any course or as part of any curriculum and is prohibited from requiring an employee to attend a training that teaches, advocates, acts upon, or promotes race or sex stereotyping. Ethical codes are weaved throughout our standards of practice, and the concept (s) in this bill, will make it difficult for the social worker to practice from an ethical and moral standard. For example, if we are not able to discuss social problems around race or sex, how are we to address the disparities in learning that are clearly evident when examining data across the state. To ignore the differences in test scores, behavior referrals, special ed, etc. would be dishonest and harmful to students and staff. Moreover, If we cannot discuss racial disparities within education, how do we assist in implementing interventions to these marginalized students and families who have been traumatized as a result of generational school failure. Social workers must look at how all aspects of trauma influence children, including generational racism and discrimination.

As school social workers, we are also concerned about practicing cultural competence under this bill. Cultural competence is an expected practice and standard for our profession. The standard reads as follows:

Social workers should demonstrate understanding of culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.

Social workers should demonstrate knowledge that guides practice with clients of various cultures and be able to demonstrate skills in the provision of culturally informed services that empower marginalized individuals and groups.

Social workers must take action against oppression, racism, discrimination, and inequities, and acknowledge personal privilege.

Social workers should demonstrate awareness and cultural humility by engaging in critical self-reflection (understanding their own bias and engaging in self-correction), recognizing clients as experts of their own culture, committing to lifelong learning, and holding institutions accountable for advancing cultural humility.

Social workers should obtain education about and demonstrate understanding of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disabilities.

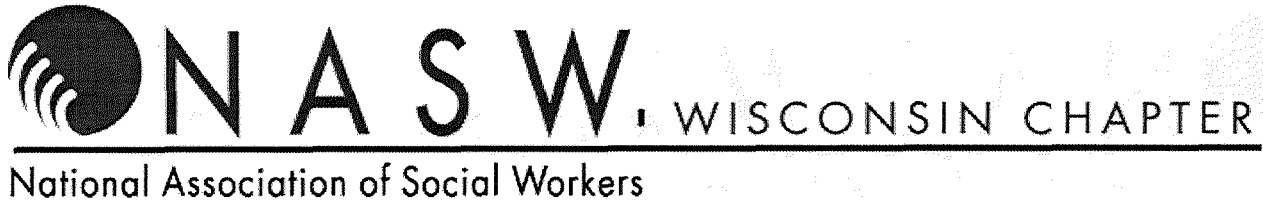
Clearly, this bill would undermine our ability to practice cultural competence in the school setting. How would we obtain professional development on social diversity and oppression if the law bans it from taking place?

How do we as social work professionals take action against oppression, racism, discrimination, inequities, and acknowledge personal privilege if we are banned from using such terminology and talking about these issues?

This bill will impact many areas of our practice, including our need to conduct a thorough assessment of the individual student, their family, and their environment and community. The information obtained in our assessment helps to guide and develop appropriate interventions; another standard of our work. We believe this bill would set a precedent that would have a ripple effect of unintended consequences. Consider the fallout of inadequate assessments and interventions? To illustrate, without proper assessment and intervention, our states' test scores and graduation completion rates will drop, which in turn will encourage teachers and families to leave our state and settle in areas where schools are more successful.

Lastly, as Marc Herstand stated so eloquently on behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Bill 411 proposes to address a problem that does not exist. There is no evidence that the public schools in our state are teaching children sex stereotyping or teaching children that one race or sex is better than another race or sex or that one individual is responsible for the acts of other individuals of the same race or sex in the past. There is absolutely no evidence that schools are teaching kids to hate each other or to hate white people. There is, however, a great deal of data that shows racial disparities in Wisconsin. If this bill is passed, school social workers and teachers alike will struggle to provide the necessary interventions to solve the problem of educational disparity in Wisconsin.

Please vote down SB and AB 411.



Chairperson Darling, Chairperson Thiesfeldt and members of the Senate and Assembly Committees on Education.

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Wisconsin Chapter, I am asking that you oppose Senate Bill 411 and Assembly Bill 411

As social workers we believe in promoting conditions, policies and practices that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States. We also believe in the importance of facilitating informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions. Beyond these values, as our country and all our communities in Wisconsin become more diverse, it becomes critical that we learn how to understand and respect differences of our fellow workers, customers and clients. Being able to understand and respect differences means understanding the history of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and understanding how policies based upon race throughout our history have impacted African Americans, other ethnic and racial communities and caused the tremendous disparities of wealth in our country. SB 411 does nothing to advance understanding of people coming from different racial and ethnic groups and as I will mention later could have the impact of intimidating teacher and instructors from covering these topics in a comprehensive manner.

Senate Bill 411 proposes to address a problem that does not exist. There is no evidence that the public schools in our state are teaching children sex stereotyping or teaching children that one race or sex is better than another race or sex or that one individual is responsible for the acts of other individuals of the same race or sex in the past. There is absolutely no evidence that schools are teaching kids to hate each other or to hate white people.

The biggest danger from this bill is the unintended consequences of intimidating teachers who are simply teaching history in a comprehensive way to the students or leading students in an open, honest discussion of history and race in our country. If you look at the fine print of this bill, if you were a Modern Problems or American History teacher for seniors in a high school in Wisconsin, you could not have a debate or discussion on such concepts as unconscious bias, affirmative action or the impact of racism on the lives of African-Americans in America today. This is pure censorship and a speech code, which is contrary to the democratic principles of our country. This bill would also encourage, sanction and support parents to take legal action against school districts when they don't like how a particular teacher is presenting their curriculum.

As a parent of sons who attended Madison public schools, there were times I had concerns about a teacher or policy. In those cases I brought the concern directly to the teacher and sometimes the principal. Did I agree 100% with everything taught or not taught? Of course not! But I had a basic respect for our school system, the teachers and the principal. This bill undermines that basic respect and could encourage parents with a particular point of view to take a teacher's comments they hear second or third hand out of context and go to court.

This bill seems designed to prevent any teaching of American history or discussion of race or sex that could lead students to feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress. By

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National Association of Social Workers

logical extension Germany's teaching of the holocaust would be illegal as it almost certainly has made German students feel discomfort, guilt and anguish about Germany's responsibility for the holocaust. To be informed citizens and critical thinkers, our students need an honest and comprehensive education of our country's history, not a whitewashed and sanitized version designed to prevent any students from feeling discomfort.

As every corner of our country becomes more diverse it is critical that our children learn to appreciate and fully accept people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. At the same time that this bill solves no real problems and creates new problems there is a tremendous need to increase education about different racial and ethnic groups in our state, including African-American history in our country. Although students are generally taught about slavery and the civil right movement, they know little to nothing about other aspects of history that shape the current inequalities in our country. How many children or even adults know that African Americans were denied federal home loans after World War II and as a result their families could not accumulate wealth over generations? How many children or adults know that African American neighborhoods were redlined so that regardless of their income they could not qualify for bank loans? How many children and adults know that there were restrictive covenants throughout the United States even into the 1960's that prohibited African Americans from moving into the best neighborhoods with the best schools and highest market value? The house that my parents bought in the 1960's in a suburb of Minneapolis had such a restrictive covenant. How many children and adults know that African Americans were denied the ability to get into trade unions? How many adults and students know the extent of lynchings and mob attacks on African American communities like the one that destroyed Black Wall Street in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the 1920'?

Instead of trying to pass bills that solve an imaginary problem, I would ask legislators to support AB 273, the African American Education Bill. We need this bill so students can get a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the history of African-Americans in his country. I would also ask legislators to support AB 381, requiring education regarding Hmong Americans and Asian-Pacific Islander Desi Americans. What we don't need is legislation encouraging parents to sue a teacher or school district if they are uncomfortable and/or don't like what a teacher is presenting on the history of African Americans and race in our country.

Please vote down SB 411 and AB 411 and instead support AB 273 and AB 381.

Marc Herstand

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Dear Wisconsin Legislators,

There is a proverb that states, “Until the lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter.” And while that is true, I think it leaves something important out: until the lions have their historians and we share their tales, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter.” After all, the lions can record thousands of years of hunts, and if the hunter simply pushes them under his leather knapsack, it’s as if they were never written.

I am often told that teaching about equality will provide only more division. Listening to the points of those on the other side of me, I have managed to summarize them into three main concerns:

1. This type of teaching focuses on the past instead of the present and future.
2. This type of teaching teaches my child that they are the oppressor just because of their skin color, sexuality, and/or gender.
3. This type of teaching is, at its core, anti-American.

I suppose, though, first I should address what “this type of teaching” is: the culturally relevant and competent curriculum being debated all over the country—the teaching of unbiased and uncensored history. We are talking about the discussion of a system built with only certain people in mind; we are talking about the discussion of the crimes of humanity committed; we are talking about how to make the future inclusive, with liberty and justice for *all*.

First of all, this type of teaching does indeed focus on the past instead of the present and future.

We are talking about the teaching of *history*; of course it focuses on the past. But the past, I have learned, is perhaps the greatest teacher of them all. Those who cannot learn from history are condemned to repeat it: George Santayana. History doesn’t repeat itself, but it often rhymes: Mark Twain. Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history: Abraham Lincoln.

Of course, the teaching of history is not infallible — remember the lions. But the direction of history must push the lions’ tales out towards the sunlight, not back into the muted shadows.

People say we should focus on the future; after all, *they* didn’t own slaves, *they* didn’t lynch anyone, *they* never pushed a Black woman to the back of the bus. To which I say, the past makes us who we are, no matter how far back the past is.

For example...

My grandfather came to the Western world with a suitcase, the clothes on his back, and a mountain of debt. He is convinced, to this day, that it's his fault my father went to a state school instead of an Ivy. And that conviction, that guilt, whose basis lays 30 years ago and three time zones away, is laid on my shoulders; the push to be ever-better, to be worthy of that Ivy title my grandfather still dreams of.

I have dealt with more comments than I can count detailing that trans and queer people didn't exist back in the "old times." And I remember honor killings, and shame, and the AIDS epidemic. Queer history impacts me every single day as I walk along the same path my elders blazed by lighting themselves on fire.

Owners of enslaved people were paid when their slaves were set free. Formerly enslaved people still couldn't find a job. So their owners got to double and triple their wealth with no setbacks, and they got to will that fortune to their sons and grandsons, and those sons and grandsons got to explicate that wealth, all while their peers of color lived in poverty after being denied education and wages under their condition of enslavement.

Of course the past impacts the present, and if we are not taught the past, then the present doesn't make sense. In order to go into the world with a full understanding, we must be taught about the generational advantages some people have over others. We were taught in kindergarten to treat everyone kindly. Now, in high school, we must learn how to think critically about why these morals are so important.

A second argument I have heard against culturally relevant and competent curriculum is that it teaches children that they are the oppressor just because of their skin color.

No. In fact, the primary purpose of Critical Race Theory — the big, bad elephant in the room — is to point out that racism is the result of complex, changing, and subtle social and institutional dynamics rather than explicit and intentional prejudices on the part of individuals. Broken down, the idea is that racism comes from the very system we are living in, rather than the consciousness of your child or anyone else.

The system of America was built by upper class, white slaveholders. Is it so surprising that the system was built without the interests of minorities in mind?

By teaching history in an unbiased and uncensored manner, your child will learn about the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the failure of the ERA, and more. They will learn about red-lining, institutional slavery, and generational poverty.

No teacher tells a child that they are guilty for the sins of their ancestors. If your child feels guilty after learning history, that is through nothing but their own critical thinking skills and developed empathy.

Besides, proponents of ideals such as Critical Race Theory don't *want* your child to feel guilty for being white. Because in the long run, that doesn't do anything. We know that you, personally, didn't build this system, unless anyone here is over 250 years old? We don't need your apologies, we need your commitment to do better, to unlearn the standards other white people have taught you, and your help amplifying our voices.

We don't need you to cry over the tales glorifying hunters, we need you to pull the lions' stories out from the darkness.

The third and final argument I'd like to acknowledge is that this type of teaching is, at its core, anti-American.

America was founded on the principle that all people were created equal, and thus all people are entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. While at the time this ideal only applied to white, rich men, we can make it true today.

Striving to be better than our past is engraved in the foundation of this country.

I deserve to be represented in my high school's curriculum. My friends, my family, and my peers deserve to learn their own history. And more than that? Everyone in Wisconsin deserves to learn about the rich, diverse history of our country and our world.

In order for us to be equal, we must understand and fight the system that keeps one group of people above the others. It's not about individual differences but rather that the system, as a whole, was built to benefit white people. And the thing is, many people don't even realize it. They think they're getting ahead in life because they work harder, or longer, or maybe they're just plain lucky.

You may think we're already equal—after all, maybe you “don't see color”. But to not see color is to ignore the generations of abuse that people of color have suffered. Not seeing color is akin to brushing under the rug every single struggle, every extra step people of color have to climb, to be equal. I understand that the concept of “not seeing color” sounds PC, but it still encourages people to ignore a system that was built to favor them and to ignore the reality that minorities face every day.

Not seeing the difference between the lion and the hunter doesn't make the hunter's bullet not fly.

This is not indoctrination. This is not extremism. This, really, shouldn't even be political. This is learning about your neighbors' history. Your colleagues' history. Your peers' history. This is to teach your children how to best enter the world that is rapidly realizing the mistakes of the past. Plain and simple, this is about empathy.

My high school's motto is a Tradition of Excellence. How will our children, your grandchildren, feel about that motto if we bucked tradition and ignored the calls for equitable, universal education? Education that includes every student in the school, not just the majority? Equitable education is not a new concept — the Wisconsin Department of Public Education has *mandated* equitable practices for decades now. The tradition of equity is there.

We can only be One Team if we support everyone. Teaching a culturally relevant and competent curriculum is the first step to doing so.

Thank you,

Oliver Lee

Against AB411

Hello Everyone. Thank you to Rabbi Bonnie Marguis for bringing us together and thank you to the sponsoring organizations, including especially Wisconsin Council of Churches and WISDOM and MOSES,

I am Lynn McDonald, and I am here representing Church Women United-Wisconsin and Church Women United-Madison.

Church Women United was started just after the end of World War II, by Eleanor Roosevelt, who reached out to the women leaders in the Womens auxiliary of black churches and white churches across the country, since at that time there were no women ministers, priests or rabbis, for support. Her mission was to get a BIG VOICE of women across the United States against hate and intolerance, and to protest loudly against the fascism that had spread in Germany and Europe, to insure that the Holocaust of the Jews would never happen again. I am proud to be here speaking today representing women in black churches and white churches across the state, and here is what I want to say.

No matter our color, background or zip code, we want our kids to have an education that imparts honesty about who we are, integrity in how we treat others, and courage to do what's right.

But the same lawmakers who have denied our classrooms resources and demanded sacrifices of our teachers are now stoking fears about our schools, trying to dictate what teachers say and block kids from learning our shared stories of confronting injustice to build a more perfect union.

They push for outdated and inaccurate lessons, redlining the realities of our history in order to justify the harms of our present.

What a good teacher knows is we can't just avoid or lie our way through our challenges; we must find age-appropriate ways to tell hard truths about our country's past and present in order to prepare our kids to create a better future.

Joining together, we can demand that our schools have the resources to meet every child's needs with well-trained and supported teachers and a curriculum that helps them reckon with and reshape our nation.

The reason we are here today is that lawmakers inside this Capitol building want to divide us on the question of whether to teach honestly about our history... in order to distract us from the fact that they have voted over and over to strip away needed funds, proposed by our governor, to support our schools. They are trying to distract and divide. We are going to unite, speak truth, and stand up for everyone in our state—white, Black, and brown alike, to get a great education.

The far right is simply using the term Critical race theory for propaganda. It is simply a dog whistle the far right can try to use to try to keep an angry voter base energized. But we are familiar with this tactic. Their Covid propaganda dog whistle against masks and vaccinations led to their hot spots of death. Well, we stand together here and elsewhere in Wisconsin without these hot spots and call out tonight this newest propaganda dog whistle no doubt dreamed up to help the far right in the next election. We ask all others to join us as we openly and freely ask these far right propagandists - have you no shame? Stop this shameful bill and meddling in our education system!

Thank you

From: Leah Deml <leahdeml@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 12:14 AM

To: Rep.Wichgers <Rep.Wichgers@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Thiesfeldt <Rep.Thiesfeldt@legis.wisconsin.gov>

Subject: Supportive of SB463

Hello,

I would like to advise you of my support for SB463, SB411, AB411, and AB414. I have been fighting tirelessly to have my children receive a nonpartisan and wholesome education free of controversial biased political issues, left wing activism, critical race theory, and identity politics.

It is a constant battle as keeping my children's public education free of these elements requires the correct school board members being elected, curriculum surveillance, advocating for curriculum transparency, school board meeting attendance etc. This takes up a lot of my time and energy. It would be wonderful if these bills were passed so I would not have to constantly worry about these issues. Thank you and please support these bills. Lots of parents need these bills.

Thank you,

Leah Deml
SDNB
414-507-3470

August 11, 2021

Co-Chairs Darling and Thiesfeldt and members of the Senate and Assembly Committees on Education

My name is Terri Phillips and I am the Executive Director for the Southeastern Wisconsin Schools Alliance (SWSA). Our membership includes over 30 public school districts and we educate roughly 25% of Wisconsin's public school children.

I am writing on behalf of the SWSA in opposition to SB411/AB411 and SB463/AB488.

Our school leaders focus on maximizing student learning and student achievement. We do this by creating learning environments that provide opportunities for ALL children. Students receive what they need, when they need it in order to set them up for success. We value and recognize differences among students and personalize educational opportunities to meet their needs.

We oppose these bills for the following reasons:

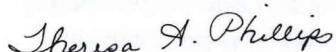
- **Local Control:** Wisconsin describes itself as a local control state. This bill is yet another mandate to impose restrictions and/or opinions upon local school districts and school boards. School leaders and their communities should determine how information should be taught to students.
- **Penalties to School Districts:**
 - Withholding 10% of state aid distributions as a penalty to school districts is incredulous. How is this possibly going to be monitored at a state level?
 - Any parent or guardian of a student may bring a claim against a district. Now districts will be dealing with legal issues constantly as each parent may have a different lens as to how curriculum should be taught. How might these be validated?
- **Posting District Curricular on the Internet:**
 - **SB411/AB411:** Most districts already post their curriculum on their websites. Curriculum is shared with parents and community on a regular basis and discussed at school board meetings. This bill is trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist.
 - **SB463/AB488:** The requirements of this bill place an incredible burden and responsibility on the school board to list all information related to learning materials and educational activities on the district website. As mentioned in the bullet above, the curriculum is shared with parents/guardians & community members via the website.
 - Educators are constantly modifying and improving opportunities for kids. The cost associated with trying to upload all of this information and maintain the content would be incredible.
 - Public schools are already taxed with multiple unfunded mandates. Will this proposed unfunded mandate improve student achievement outcomes or further place undue burden on our education leaders? How does this bill support kids?

- **Conflicting requirements between state statutes:**
 - Holocaust Statute- signed into law April 2021
 - This law requires Wisconsin middle and high school social studies classes to teach about the Holocaust and other genocides.
 - How are social studies educators possibly going to teach about the Holocaust without a discussion about racism and anti semitism? The schools (educators) would be penalized as a result. This is contrary to current law.
 - Other bills circulating that arguably contradict this bill include:
 - [AB381/SB379](#) relating to the school board to provide instruction on Hmong Americans and Asian Pacific Islander Desi Americans.
 - [AB273](#) relating to required instruction in African American history in the elementary and high school grades and making an appropriation. (FE)
- **Historical Educational Content:** How can history teachers possibly discuss and teach some of historical events that have occurred without being in violation of this bill? Students will be unable to learn and discuss events such as
 - The U.S. Civil War
 - World War II and the atrocities of the Holocaust
 - The 15th Amendment; right to vote shall not be denied on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude
 - The 19th Amendment; Women's Right to vote; Women's Suffrage Movement
 - Native American History
 - And the list goes on...

These proposed bills make it very difficult for our educators to teach many key events in world and US History. In addition, these bills inhibit the ability to hear multiple and diverse perspectives so our children can make informed choices and decisions. Ultimately, these bills eliminate the opportunity for civil discourse on critical historical conversations without fear of repercussions.

We ask that you step back and review the language in these bills and consider the negative impact these bills will have on future generations. We ask the committees to oppose these bills.

Respectfully,



Terri Phillips
SWSA Executive Director
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www.schoolsalliance.com



Senate Bill Hearing On CRT

Mr. Chair and members of the committee,

I'll start with a few comments on the *fiction* that is Critical Race Theory. It has been shown to contain no scholarly or intellectual value through peer reviews. It's revisionist history. This junk indoctrinated into the minds of anybody, but especially young impressionable minds, is like feeding kids LSD. LSD is a synthetic, psychedelic, mind altering and mind destroying drug. So is CRT. Young minds have not fully developed at this stage to be able to process this garbage, nor have they been trained to be critical thinkers to question things they are being fed. Their minds soak up things they are being told like a sponge. Children simply do not have a deep understanding of the world at these ages. They simply and naively trust that what they are being told is fact and truth based. The age group of children we are talking about here is a population in need of our protection, not exploitation. Parents play the most important role in providing protection for their children. When they drop their child off at school, they hand off that need for protection to school officials. They trust that their child will not be emotionally or psychologically exploited or abused physically by school officials.

Imagine the horror parents experienced when they learned that their child was being emotionally and psychologically abused with the indoctrination of this hate filled ideology called critical race theory. Radical Muslim schools do this. Young Muslim children are exposed and indoctrinated with hate toward Jews in their schools. They hear it every day in school and at home and by the time they reach adulthood they have been thoroughly brainwashed into hating others. Children don't instinctively hate. Adults teach them to hate. With CRT, it's about self-hate first and then it's turned outward with hatred toward white folks. This is *repulsive*. It offends the senses. Are you ok with tax dollars being used to support this hateful ideology? I'm not. Not my tax dollars anyway.

A parent is acting *responsibly* by leaping into action to protect their child. In fact, they have a *duty* to do so and if they do not, they have abandoned their responsibility as parents. Under Wisconsin State Statutes 948.21, that is a crime of child neglect. It states that any person who is responsible for a child's welfare who, through his or her actions or failure to take action intentionally contributes to the neglect of that child.

Now let's set our sights on why we are here today. Parents and other stakeholders like taxpayers in this instance, are here literally begging for their elected representatives to help them protect their children and to take charge of *how* they want their children taught and *what* they want their children taught.

I have been working with several parent groups who want control of their public schools. It's about time. For too long, parents have been missing in action. They have blindly trusted that school officials would not abuse their children and would simply engage in instructing their child in core competencies like reading, writing, math, science, technology, and engineering for instance. If there is one positive about the COVID pandemic it is that virtual learning at home allowed parents to take a peek inside their child's classroom. What they saw shook many of them to their very core. They found that their children were being exploited and indoctrinated with a vile ideology and exposed to perverted sexual material.

So now parents are actually having to *plead* with school officials to stop this filth from being forced down their child's throats. This garbage is anathema to the parent's values.



The first thing I told one mom was that their first mistake was *asking* school districts, school boards and Superintendents to stop. Asking in a political environment gets you nowhere. I reminded moms that these are *your children*, not theirs and that these were the *parents' schools* not the school officials. I told them, stop groveling, get up off your knees and **DEMAND** control of these tax supported schools. I told them that they were going to have to stop being so polite and to develop an edge because their politeness was being exploited and viewed as a weakness. Show them I said that you can go from zero to Momma grizzly in no time flat. This kind of advice was known to them. I told them it would seem strange at first but after a while they would realize that when you are not being heard, you have to turn up the heat. And they are. Moms have built a critical mass of parents across the country demanding that this critical race theory garbage be banned from schools. It has no intellectual value. It's not welcome. The purveyors of this excrement can take it somewhere else. Just get it out of our public schools.

Elected school board members need to be reminded of their place in a representative democracy. They are elected to carry out the will of the *parents*. Instead, many school board members are carrying out the will of special interests like teachers' unions, the Marxist movement called Black Lives Matter and other identity politics subversives. Instead of behaving like public servants, they are acting like *public rulers*.

As stated in the Declaration of Independence, the Framers wrote that..." *whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these Ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying it's Foundation on such Principles, and organizing Powers in such Form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness.*"

Members of the committee, in short that simply means the consent of the governed. That would be us. In a representative democracy, we the people are sovereign, not elected officials.

Parents have *not* consented for their children to be emotionally and psychologically abused through the indoctrination of critical race theory in public instruction. Parents don't care about the efficacy of CRT. They simple don't want it taught, they don't need a reason why and it is no longer open for discussion with school officials. Let me be clear on this...NO CURRICULUM COURSE OF STUDY OR POLICY SHOULD EVER BE ENACTED BY A SCHOOL BOARD, SCHOOL DISTRICT OR SUPERINTENDENT WITHOUT THE PRIOR AND COMPLETE CONSENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL PARENT AND THAT IT MEETS THAT PARENT'S UNIQUE VALUES AND DESIRES FOR THEIR CHILDREN. Are we clear?

It would be nice to have the cover of state law like those being proposed here but these laws don't go far enough. You are dancing *around* the issue. Parents deserve bold and aggressive action from you on this. You guys are playing small ball. Parents should have audio access to recordings of daily teacher instruction inside the classroom so from time to time they can peek inside to verify what their children are being taught. The next step after that should be videotaping teachers inside the classroom. Teachers are public employees. Schools are a publicly owned asset. Parents have a right to know what is happening inside a classroom. The day of blind trust that things are fine inside the classroom is over. Transparency is what is needed. We have body cams on police officers, don't we?

My recommendation to these parent groups moving forward in the event that they continue to be ignored and when voting doesn't work, is to turn up the heat. I counseled them to engage in the political action tactics effectively used by the left in order to effect change. Tactics like organized protests and marches, general strikes, boycotts and even picketing in front of the homes of school officials and legislators, and as a last resort...civil disobedience. I motivate them by asking...isn't your child worth it?



In closing let me say this. *We The People* are through allowing Left wing agitators to bully, harass, brow beat and call us ugly names in an attempt to intimidate us into silence. We are also through with putting up with the insolence of the political class. Stop telling us what you *can't* do and start telling us what you *will* do, or we will find somebody else who will.

We prefer debate, discussion, and dialogue through existing institutions. Those institutions however are not functioning right now. We are not being listened to or being heard so we have no other recourse.

Thank you.

Sheriff (RET). David A. Clarke Jr
President, Rise Up Wisconsin Inc

I would like to voice my complete opposition to SB411, as I believe it is imperative—both morally and educationally—that we don't whitewash the history being taught in our schools.

As a 64-year-old white father and grandfather, I can't abide the notion that we've come to irrationally fear the trauma that our white children might feel upon hearing about the true history of our nation, all while ignoring the trauma that our Black and brown children have felt for decades by NOT divulging it!

As Amanda Gorman stated in her poem "The Hill We Climb"

"It's because being American is more than a pride we inherit,
it's the past we step into
and how we repair it"

Don Thornton
514 S Midvale Blvd.
Madison, WI, 53711
608-669-0999

I oppose State Senate Bill 411 and Bill 463. To deny history, to encourage oppression, and to limit free speech is unpatriotic and damaging. I am appalled that my own representatives are sponsoring these bills. They certainly do not represent my values, not to mention truth and fact.

Jennifer Peters

Constituent from
9025 W Highlander Dr
Mequon, WI 53097
Almosthope@yahoo.com
+14143244458

Dear Senator Darling:

Knowing you as I do, there is no way I see you coming up with this bill. Please do not be part of it.

I suspect it will make teachers very vulnerable in a way which detracts from preparing children for being insightful citizens. It will also cause districts to spend huge tax dollars on lawsuits.

The schools have not sunk to the level which radicals think they have. They do a super job in the midst of having been politicized to a level which has historically been unimaginable. Please do not make it worse.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Karl

Karl Hertz, Ed.D.

Dear Senator Darling and Representative Thiesfeldt,

I am a retired special education teacher from the Madison Metropolitan School District. I taught and/or supported grades 7 through 12, from 1977 through 2013. During that time, I worked with students who were mainstreamed into History and Social Studies Classes. I served as a substitute teacher for MMSD from 2013 until March of 2020, when Covid arrived. As a substitute teacher, I presented the curriculum of many History/Social Studies teachers at the High School level.

During my 40+ years, as an educator, I never saw any curriculum or witnessed any teacher facilitating instruction, in such a way, that promoted that students should think, conclude, or ever believe that one race or sex is better than another. There is zero evidence that our public schools have ever taught children that they are responsible for the acts of those who came before them. Nor have they been taught to feel bad about themselves or to hate anyone!

What has happened and is **continuing** to happen, is that Wisconsin students are receiving an incomplete education of our US History. Many experiences of African Americans and other minorities have clearly been excluded from our K-12 curriculum.

For example, at age 67 I know that neither I, nor my students have been taught about many policies, actions, and events that were based upon race.

Practices or events such as Red lining, the Tulsa Massacre, and denied GI Bill promises to a million Black WWII veterans, to name a few, have been omitted from textbooks and curriculum. These and other occurrences have caused tremendous disparities of wealth in our country.

Our classrooms have become and continue to grow more diverse every year. They consist of students with very different backgrounds, histories, and abilities. Teaching the history of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds is necessary in order for students to become knowledgeable and respectful of those who are different from them. It is the job of educators to present a **conclusive** history of those who came before us, free of bias and omissions, and full of facts.

My question for you is --what is the purpose of this bill that you have introduced?

Senate Bill 411 proposes to address a problem that does not exist. To claim a need to prevent any teaching of American history or discussion of race or sex that could lead students to feel discomfort, in my opinion, is ludicrous. We need to give our students the credit that they deserve. They are capable of processing truthful information and becoming knowledgeable thinkers and problem solvers if they receive an education that provides a truthful and complete history, that does not ignore impactful events,

Please give some time and consideration to my email. I am happy to hear your thoughts as well, but I cannot attend the hearing.

I have attended hearings in the past and know how crowded they can be. It's unfortunate that it's being held at a time of rising Covid cases in Dane County. I would not feel safe.

Sincerely,

Mickey Schaefer
27 Oak Grove Dr
Madison, Wisconsin
53717
608-841-2184

Sen. Darling:

I am urging you to reject SB 411 which was introduced on July 10th along with its companion bill in the Assembly. Due to a physical disability, I was not able to attend the joint hearing of the Senate and Assembly Education Committees yesterday, August 11th, at 10:00 am in Rm. 412 East of the Capitol, but I want my views to be known. I emailed my legislators and I also want to submit my statements to you as chair of the Senate Committee on Education. As a Dominican Sister, I am committed to truth-telling and compelled to justice. (The motto of the Dominican Order is "Veritas" or "Truth".) This bill's intent is to negate the truth of America's history as a country

Although phrased as race-neutral and never referring to "critical race theory," this bill is designed to prevent schools from teaching about the realities of racial oppression over the last 400 years. It would absolve white people of any responsibility for acknowledging or addressing the damage done by previous and continuing unjust treatment of people of color in our society. The bill would even prevent anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees of public school districts.

- The mandates in this bill would teach platitudes to our youth while ignoring and obfuscating the truth of race and sex in our society.
- We must teach the truth, not an idealized version of it. We must teach what our society has actually done. Our young people CAN handle the truth!
- Our educational system must prepare our youth to thrive in the real world. They must learn to be citizens of a multicultural society and be equipped to understand and work with a diversity of people, cultures and viewpoints. If we fail to do this, we will fail our youth and jeopardize their future
- Education should provide our children with an age appropriate, clear-eyed view of our country's history so they can celebrate our country's greatness but also understand its shortcomings.

My hope and that of others who are speaking out against this bill is for white people and people of color to work together without blame or rancor to repair the divisions between races, to advance true equality, and to create a fairer and more just world.

Sincerely,

S. Frances Hoffman
6136 Portage Rd.
DeForest, WI 53532
franhoffop@gmail.com

Dear Senator Darling,

Please report at Wednesday's hearing my opposition to Senate Bill 411. It actually startles me that such a bill would even be introduced. ALL people must be respected and knowing the truth of our nation's history will help to bring respect. Please do not let this bill go forward.

Ruth Kolpack
608-362-7356

Dear Senator Darling,

Please distribute my comments to all of your committee members.

I am a resident of Waukesha County; a person of faith; a former librarian; and a religious leader who promotes justice, equity, and compassion in human relations. I am writing in opposition to Wisconsin State Senate Bill 411.

Teachers are licensed professionals who are dedicated to helping our children and youth grow into informed, engaged citizens who live in a multicultural society and should be equipped to understand and work with a diversity of people, cultures and viewpoints.

As professionals, educators strive to help students practice critical thinking skills. This includes learning which sources are most reputable/trustworthy, understanding the perspective and context of the author of said source, and exploring multiple viewpoints in order to come to one's own conclusions.

Senate Bill 411 would unnecessarily limit professional educators' options in helping students learn the full truth about the founding of the United States. Through my work with the families of my congregation, I deeply believe that students are smart, capable, and eager to learn the truth about the complicated issues of our day—including racism, sexism, and other harmful manifestations of inequity. Students CAN handle the truth — let's make sure we give them that opportunity.

Please vote AGAINST Wisconsin State Senate Bill 411.

Thank you for your service to our state.

Sincerely,
Rev. Carin Bringelson
211 Lawn Street, Apt. 123
Hartland, WI 53029

Statement of Public Testimony in opposition to Wisconsin State Senate Bill 411 (before Senate Committee on Education); Wisconsin State Assembly Bill 411 (before Assembly Committee on Education); and Wisconsin State Senate Bill 414 (before Assembly Committee on Government Oversight and Accountability)

August 11, 2021

Dear Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly Committees of Education and Wisconsin State Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight members,

My name is Jeff Roman. I am a resident of Milwaukee, WI and constituent of the 16th State Assembly and 6th State Senate districts. I am submitting this statement of public testimony strongly encouraging you to oppose Senate and Assembly Bills 411 and Assembly Bill 414 relating to anti-racism and anti-sexism in pupil instruction and anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees of school districts and independent charter schools, and employees of state government and local government.

I have spent the last 20 years as a racial equity educator, trainer, and advocate in Milwaukee's K-12 and public sectors. My journey started as a teen mentor and has allowed me to become a youth development and racial equity fellow with the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change and a national curriculum developer and trainer of subject matter relating to adolescent development and capacity building to improve outcomes along race and gender lines. This work led me to becoming a two-term commissioner on the City of Milwaukee Equal Rights Commission; a program officer with the Community Advocates Public Policy Institute where I provided training for schools, youth service agencies, and community-based organizations who work at the intersections of race, poverty, and policy; to becoming a training consultant and member of Derute Consulting Cooperative, a Wisconsin-based firm which works locally, statewide, and globally to support communities, organizations, government systems, and public sector institutions committed to racial and social justice. I now serve as Executive Director of the Office on African American Affairs at Milwaukee County, which provides support, training, and technical assistance to local government leaders, departments, and municipalities as they advance work to dismantle institutional racism and build up the policies, practices, and culture to ensure race isn't a factor in determining health and quality of life outcomes.

I am very concerned that these bills provide fuel to support a misguided, ill-informed, and politicized nationwide effort regarding Critical Race Theory (CRT) that overall serves to silence and omit the real and lived experiences of communities who have been historically oppressed and marginalized, undervalued, discriminated against because of the color of their skin. I'm even more concerned about the intended and unintended impacts these bills will have on our state and our nation's ability to confront and uproot in any meaningful way systemic racism, which is defined as a global social construct and hierarchy of racialized power, privilege, and prejudice that favors white people over people of color. This definition and the historical context of race and racism is critically important to understand how these bills support and sustain all forms of racism, and are examples of what Critical Race Theory, contrary to current anti-CRT propaganda, accurately asserts – that racism is embedded in every institution in our society, including local, state, and federal government, and uses policy and legislation as tools to maintain racial dominance.. This is the factual story of our nation's existence that has been hidden in plain sight since the start of our democracy. Passage and implementation of these bill will harm all residents of Wisconsin, regardless of the color of their skin. Historically accurate public instruction and training on the foundation of race and racism provides all Wisconsinites the skills and capacities to understand how systemic racism, intentionally and unintentionally, works in favor of some and creates

barriers for others, and the tools for public sectors employees to recognize and respect the diverse values, beliefs, and perspectives of those who make up the workforces of our local school districts, local and state government, and the communities they serve. This skill and capacity development is critical for doing the work of getting out of our own way and sharing responsibility and accountability for dismantling institutional racism in all our organizations and communities.

The disproportionate threat of COVID-19 on residents of color across the state, coupled with the Black Lives Matter movement has brought urgency to the need to finally confront the stronghold and long-standing impacts of racism. At the same time, we are experiencing the emboldened resentment of those with the strongest commitment to a persona and cause that aims to maintain racial dominance and who have the ability to influence policymakers to advance bills like Senate and Assembly Bills 411 and 414 that will diminish our ability to learn from, critically examine, and shift culture and practice so that everyone in Wisconsin can thrive. Please vote against the passage of Senate and Assembly Bills 411 and 414.

Thank you,

Jeff Roman
2139 N. 34th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53208
(414) 793-3171

"It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains." - Assata Shakur

August 11, 2021

Dear Esteemed Legislators and Committee Members,

I am a White educator, committed voter and activist, and school psychologist working in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS). I have followed the recent debates regarding Critical Race Theory (CRT) and associated conversations. I also have extensive training in law enforcement, urban sociology, social psychology, and race relations. Part of my work with MPS is dedicated to anti-racist practices within our profession and our work with children. The main idea behind this work is to acknowledge how traditional practices may contribute to unfair outcomes for children of color and to make changes that will provide equity to these students, in effect ensuring a level playing field for all students. While a treatise on CRT is too wieldy to explore in this space, at its core CRT suggests race matters and that it is a negative factor in legal and social outcomes for people of color throughout society. Without having a name attached to it, many of my White colleagues already understand and believe the daily implications that race has on our students and colleagues of color. We have seen it up close.

So, CRT makes sense at a basic level. Unfortunately, in recent months the theory has morphed into absurd ideas that defy credibility, fueled by general misunderstanding and misinformation. Some of the rhetoric has been incredibly offensive. One example suggests that CRT would have educators telling White children that they are inferior because their ancestors might have enslaved Black people. I don't know any educator (whether White or Black) who would say something like that to a child or adult. Additionally, to my knowledge there is no CRT curriculum, nor handbook with any of the wild conjectures that have been propagated by parts of the uninformed public. It angers me that the integrity of myself and my fellow educators would be impugned with such untruths, and I am insulted that our many years of training, licensure, and background would be ignored in favor of legislation that dictates how educators perform their jobs.

The fact is that it is my job to discuss race because that is what my students and colleagues of color want, and I gladly engage in this work because I love them and care about their wellbeing. People of color talk about race, because it matters to them. It matters to them because of what it has meant historically, and in the present. Passing legislation such as the proposed Bill 411 would greatly curtail this work and these conversations. It would also open a Pandora's Box in which we start banning things we find inconvenient, or uncomfortable. Race and racism are difficult because people of

color are hurting and they are looking to good people of conscience—that is, good White people of conscience—to answer the call and begin doing the work of healing and understanding. If we can't talk about race, there is no healing and our ignorance to this problem will continue.

Some may suggest that Bill 411, as it is currently written, doesn't specifically ban talking about race. Perhaps not. However, historical concepts within my very own profession, would be subject to scrutiny if one held tightly to the wording of this bill. Intelligence testing and other analytic tools, invented in the early 20th century, followed from reprehensible ideas in other fields of study that suggested Caucasians were superior to other races, a fact that is generally well known but still needs to be occasionally explained to colleagues via training. Districts seeking refuge from liability would almost assuredly end or significantly draw back these kinds of working sessions. Thus, Bill 411 would put the collaborative anti-racist work of our district in jeopardy and leave individuals to find answers on their own. Being anti-racist isn't an individual and automatic thought process. It is a purposive, collaborative and reflexive action undertaken best by groups of committed educators. It requires the work of many people, especially White individuals who talk about race and work openly to improve outcomes for people of color.

Regardless of how this bill is worded, I believe any law that prohibits educators from using specific language is a form of censorship and is unconstitutional. As a concerned citizen of Wisconsin and a public-school educator, I oppose the formation of Bill 411 or any such bill that dispenses extreme control over pedagogy from the legislative pulpit. While I may disagree with the proposal, I agree that parents have a right to exercise control over what their children are taught in schools. Please leave these kinds of decisions to local governance and let parents and school boards decide these outcomes for their respective school districts.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

James D. LeDuc

3465 S. 38th Street

Milwaukee, WI 53215

The proposed legislation before us prohibits race- and sex- stereotyping in public and charter schools. The “race” part of that is what “Critical Race Theory” is all about; this presentation will briefly address that specific matter.

Many Wisconsin Schools are either on the verge of installing “Critical Race Theory” (CRT) as part of grade-, middle-, and high-school curricula, or have already done so. Although it goes under many names using terms like “Inclusive,” “Anti-Racist”, “Equity”, “Cultural competency”, and other benign-sounding appellations, it is offensive to both American principles and academic rigor.

While it pretends to abrogate racism, it does precisely the opposite by declaring that there are only two kinds of people in America: the oppressed and the oppressor, which are respectively blacks and whites. This is a reduction to the absurd; in previous incarnations, the same Hegelian analytical method spoke of “classes” instead of “races,” or of “men” as oppressors with “women” being victims. (It is also legitimate to ask: “What happened to people of Hispanic, Oriental, or sub-continental Indian descent?”)

The current fad, CRT, denies individual responsibility for racism AND denies one’s agency and ability to escape from ‘oppression.’ Individual responsibility for racism is swallowed into “institutional”, “systemic”, or “structural” racism (identified with “whiteness,”) and it implies that blacks are incapable of rising above those restraints.

If you can answer the question “How high is up?” you may be able to determine the end-point of CRT’s usefulness. There is no quantifiable measure for “systemic” or “structural” racism—thus, the goal posts can be moved at the whim of those who are assaulting your children and you with this curriculum.

Nonetheless, CRT proposes a remedy called “equity.” Equity is NOT equality, which was enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and ratified emphatically in the Civil Rights Acts of 1866 and 1964, not to mention the 14th and 15th Amendment to the Constitution. “Equity” calls for equality of RESULTS—that is, all people should have the same school grades, homes, cars, bank accounts, and investments. Exactly the same. We’re told that this is the optimum objective for American society. Unmentioned? It didn’t work when Stalin tried it, it failed in Cuba, and it’s about to crash in Venezuela, too.

Frankly, pushing a blatantly racist narrative into your children by teaching them that if they are white, they are oppressors and if they are black, they are helpless victims is morally repulsive, as Glenn Loury stated in his June 5th lecture at Pepperdine.

All of us who are honest recognize that American society is one which can be improved. All of us who are honest also recognize that America has imposed improvement upon itself, at great pain, since its founding in 1776.

And all of us who are honest want an American society which lives by the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, where we are judged NOT by the color of our skin but by the content of our character. THIS is what Wisconsin educators should strive to teach and what our children should learn.

Sincerely,

Lawrence A Stich

N25W24129 River Park Ct.

Pewaukee WI 53072

From: Leah Deml <leahdeml@gmail.com>

Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2021 12:14 AM

To: Rep.Wichgers <Rep.Wichgers@legis.wisconsin.gov>; Rep.Thiesfeldt <Rep.Thiesfeldt@legis.wisconsin.gov>

Subject: Supportive of SB463

Hello,

I would like to advise you of my support for SB463, SB411, AB411, and AB414. I have been fighting tirelessly to have my children receive a nonpartisan and wholesome education free of controversial biased political issues, left wing activism, critical race theory, and identity politics.

It is a constant battle as keeping my children's public education free of these elements requires the correct school board members being elected, curriculum surveillance, advocating for curriculum transparency, school board meeting attendance etc. This takes up a lot of my time and energy. It would be wonderful if these bills were passed so I would not have to constantly worry about these issues. Thank you and please support these bills. Lots of parents need these bills.

Thank you,

Leah Deml
SDNB
414-507-3470

Testimony before Wisconsin State Senate and Wisconsin State Assembly Education Committees
August 11, 2021

SPEAKING IN OPPOSITION TO SENATE BILL 411 AND ASSEMBLY BILL 411

Submitted by : Eva Hagenhofer
470 W. Willow Court, Fox Point, Wisconsin

I was born ten years after my Chicago born father, son of immigrants, joined the U.S. Army to fight against German fascism and three years after he met and married my German mother. The GI Bill brought them together in a Swiss art school.

His stories were the stuff of adventure and camaraderie while fighting the good fight. We seldom heard our mothers' stories and, from her silence, understood that she was ashamed of her homeland. It would have been better to talk and learn.

Nonetheless, at this time of year she baked pflaumenkuchen and at Christmas we had big boxes of lebkuchen straight from Stuttgart. After school, Mama made us tall glasses of himbersaft and the price of weisswurst was kind to any budget. There was a dirndl in my closet and a lodencoat for winter. Kate Küsse was my favorite doll; like her I had blond braids and, in ways I can't explain, felt my Mother's shame.... I wanted to know the story I hadn't been told and eventually learned that there had been "good Germans," brave men and women who rescued and hid persecuted Jews, Gypsies, and Homosexuals. Shame turned to pride.

What's the lesson? History is many-sided, many layered, complex. There's the stuff that makes us cringe and the stuff that makes us more connected, more human. If we ignore one side, we diminish the other.

DPI standards mandate that Wisconsin's 3rd – 5th graders learn about the history of our state so that they can "connect past events, people, and ideas to the present; use different perspectives to draw conclusions; and suggest current implications". As they do, they should learn that in 1854 abolitionism was a founding principle of the Republican Party and that in that same year Racine Presbyterians rescued Joshua Glover, a runaway slave, and that the citizens of Waukesha received and protected him before absconding him to safety in Canada.

But how can this part of our history be learned without also learning about chattel slavery which allowed white traders to steal Africans from their homes and white landowners to buy and sell these men and women, who earned no wages and were seen as nothing more than farm equipment?

In 1991, the Wisconsin legislature signed Act 31 into law, mandating the teaching of Wisconsin and Native American History and affirming that it is the schools' responsibility to educate in order to dismantle

"the racism and general ignorance around tribal sovereignty and treaty rights of Wisconsin's Indian nations.... that all public school districts provide instruction in the history, sovereignty, and culture of the 11 federally-recognized tribes and bands in Wisconsin and that this must be included in the curriculum at least twice during

the elementary years and once in high school..... [and that] Wisconsin teachers must also be instructed on these topics to acquire their teaching licenses.”

But how can the history of our First Nation people be learned without also being taught about their forced expulsion and displacement from eastern lands? And how can our students understand the existence of reservations without also learning about the U.S. government policies of Manifest Destiny and the Homestead Act which gave Indian land to white Europeans (like my grandparents) ?

Commendably, this legislature recently passed the Holocaust Education Bill in an attempt to correct the widespread ignorance and denial of the Nazi regime’s genocidal ambitions which ultimately killed more than 6 million Jews and half (250,000 – 500,000) of 1 million European Romani/Gypsies .

But how do teachers meet the mandates of this new law, which instructs teachers to teach students (in age appropriate ways) about how Hitler and the machine of the Third Reich first took away the citizenship and employment, then homes and possessions, and finally the lives of its victims because it sought a supreme, pure Aryan race?

Senate Bill 411 and Assembly Bill 411 are mistakenly motivated by fear and mistrust of (1) teachers’ ability to teach in fair and balanced ways and (2) students’ curiosity about and ability to handle the truth, denying them the opportunity to learn, think, grow, and enter our pluralistic democracy with the understanding, ability, and willingness to defend it. By limiting classroom learning and discussion about the official and individual acts of racial oppression which have stained our history over the last 400 years, they also undermine DPI standards that stress the teaching of critical thinking.

By prohibiting “teaching[which would cause] “individuals to feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any form of psychological distress because of his or her race or sex,” (section 1g) these Bills not only dismiss the feelings of students of color whose history is regularly minimized or dismissed in schools, by avoiding the discomfort that educates, they commit lies of omission. If we decline to teach them the truth, our students will eventually learn on their own and we will have miseducated them.

This proudly abolitionist state, once a national leader in education, must teach and uphold our nation’s full, accurate, and unflinching history so that **our children can learn about how our nation has, from its founding, betrayed the ideals of its birth and, in classrooms that embrace all children, grapple with their underlying causes in order to create a “more perfect union.”** I implore you to reject the wording and sentiment of SB411 and AB411 . These Bills, crafted and promoted by organizations outside of Wisconsin, do not represent who we are. We are badgers ... we might blink at the bright light of truth, but we don’t flinch.

Leanne
Green Bay Public Schools
54303

Schools across the nation from K-12 and college need to get back to teaching American History.

Teachers should NOT be telling students who they affiliate with. My hope and dream is for every student to think for themselves.

My grandfather was a wise man. I always knew what party he was affiliated with, however he made you do the research. If he asked you a question, it was not good enough just to say Yes or No.

You had to back up your answer. So, grandfather was a good teacher. He made me think of why I was choosing yes or no.

Schools are teaching things that blow my mind away. I have a teaching degree and only taught 1 year - right now the way things are in schools I am so very happy.

I also have been told that teachers swear in the classrooms, and they are to be role models?

Schools need to take a major step backwards!

Only Those Who Feel Threatened Hate Teaching about Race

The Republicans' latest wedge issue is being disguised in two bills brought forward by Sen. Darling and Rep. Thiesfledt—SB 141 and SB 463. These bills may seem to be endorsing non-discrimination on the basis of race or sex, but they do more and are built on two baseless beliefs.

The first is that learning how our laws, governmental policies and allocation of society's resources have allowed, if not promoted, barriers to the progress of non-whites will make students feel "discomfort, guilt, anguish or any other psychological distress." The second? Learning about our country's history of achievements while also facing up to its centuries of dehumanizing minorities will cause white students to feel ashamed of their race and country and become less patriotic.

Essentially, SB 141 prohibits our districts' faculties from teaching history and government based on facts rather than legends. It also disallows districts offering faculty programs dealing with systemic roadblocks to racial equity that still exist. Think about this for a minute. We have our legislature editing (revising?) history and mandating that teachers do the same.

SB 463 looks OK at first. Districts must make their curricula public via the Internet. But then it takes micro-management to a new level. In addition to posting courses of study, all textbooks, resource materials, bibliographies and teaching methods are to be included and the whole plan must be updated at least twice a year.

Let's mark both of these bills with a red F.

August 6, 2021

Senate Bill 411 and Senate Bill 463 Testimony

This bill attempts to ban teaching systemic racism and critical race theory. Let's be honest about it: the term, critical race theory only means including the true history of African Americans in our country as part of American History. Teachers ought to be able to teach the truth of our history both as a state and a country. I speak in opposition to Senate Bill 411 because it attempts to obliterate and whitewash our history in a way that is inaccurate and which no sensible educator would teach to students. Self examination is the path to improvement. Teaching the truth of our history does not demean our children. It lifts them up and breeds mutual respect.

There is no evidence that any teaching in Wisconsin teaches "students race or sex stereotyping" or that "one race or gender is inherently superior to another, or that by virtue of an individual's race or sex that that student bears responsibility for acts committed in the past by other individuals of the same race or sex." Senate Bill 411 presumes all of these myths which are not fact-based in the schools in Wisconsin. It is a misguided attempt to make it seem that by teaching the actual history of our country, white students will be blamed for slavery and other tragic aspects of our history. That's not the purpose of education at all, nor what Wisconsin teachers actually do.

Wouldn't it be refreshing for the Legislature to enact a bill that actually teaches American history with all of its complexity and the actual facts instead of trying to ban the true facts? Teaching accurate history of a pluralistic society is not open for debate.

Such a bill was introduced in the State Legislature in March, sponsored by State Representative Lakeshia Myers and State Senator Lena Taylor, partnering with the African American/Jewish Friendship Group Education Committee, of which we are all members.

That bill is LRB 0402, also known as Assembly Bill 273. Instead of working to ban actual history, which is the point of the Senate Bill 411, Assembly Bill 273, co-sponsored by 41 Democrats, would include African American history as an integral part of American history, which is long overdue.

What are the sponsors of Senate Bills 411 & 463 so very scared of, namely, that the facts will be taught on 4000 lynchings of African Americans in the South for which there is a Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, the Tulsa Race Massacre in 1921, slavery, Reconstruction and Jim Crow? And also, that African Americans

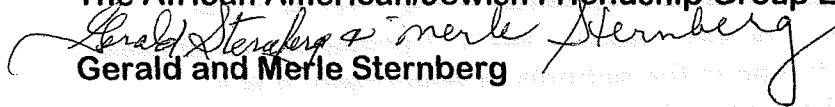
built the White House, they contributed mightily to medical advances, such as the Moderna vaccine to prevent Covid, many critical inventions, and so much else that is good in our country.

The sponsors of Senate Bills 411 & 463 are so worried that our bill, Assembly Bill 273, otherwise known as LRB 0402, could be adopted for students K-12 that they won't even give it a public hearing.

Let the sunshine in and let us eliminate bans that keep our children from an honest and accurate rendition of American history. Most Wisconsinites are not afraid of the truth. Vote down this short-sighted ideological effort that the sponsors of Senate bills 411 and 463 are promoting. The sponsors of these bills are the real cancel culture advocates.

Let the people of Wisconsin be heard in every community in the State, asking for a public hearing for Assembly Bill 273 and ultimately, its adoption.

The African American/Jewish Friendship Group Education Committee


Gerald and Merle Sternberg

August 6, 2021

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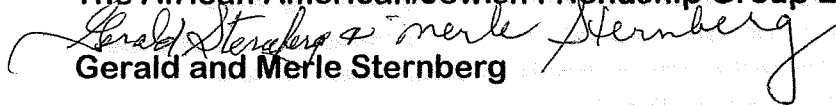
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The African American/Jewish Friendship Group Education Committee


Gerald and Merle Sternberg



August 11, 2021

To: The Senate Committee on Education and Assembly Committee on Education

Re: Opposition to SB 411 and SB 463

Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice is an interfaith education and advocacy organization. We work with clergy, congregations, and people of faith across the state on issues of social and economic justice.

We are writing in opposition to SB 411 and SB 463. SB 411/AB 411 prohibit schools from teaching students about racism or sexism or that anyone by virtue of their race or sex bear responsibility for acts committed in our history by individuals of their race or sex. SB 463 requires school boards to post online twice a year all instructional materials – curricula, lesson plans, handouts, videos, books, etc. that are used in pupil instruction.

On the surface, these bills may seem sensible and uncontroversial. But they set us on a dangerous path to stifle the teaching of any difficult or sensitive topics and make it impossible for our schools to teach honestly and openly about the true history of discrimination against Native Americans, the institution of slavery, and ongoing racism that pervades our society.

Further, these bills are based on the false premise that our schools currently teach students, particularly white students, to feel guilty or personally responsible for the racist actions of their ancestors. This is not true.

What is true is that we built this country on land stolen from the indigenous population and built it largely through slave labor. The legacy of these activities permeates our society today and perpetuates racist and discriminatory policies and systems against Black, brown, and indigenous populations.

Our students can handle this truth. Not only can they handle it, but they must learn it.

It is necessary to teach that history in order to understand and address the ongoing impact it continues to have on the systemic inequalities in our society.

The protests after the killing of George Floyd, and the health and economic impact of the pandemic, have thrown into stark relief the reality of racial inequality in our country. We have

seen how the unequal access to health care has led to greater rates of infection, hospitalization, and death in communities of color. The economic fallout of the pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on communities of color. The harsh reality of police violence against people of color confronts us on the news almost daily. None of us can escape awareness of these injustices.

Our children see what is happening, and they ask questions. Our schools need to be able to address these questions honestly and openly. By teaching our children the truth of our history and how it still affects us today, we build trust between our students and their teachers. Our students need to be equipped to live in a multicultural society, to think critically about what they read and hear on the news and on social media, and to analyze and understand the systems and policies that underpin our society.

We cannot build a more equitable society for future generations without understanding our past.

The Bible says, in Leviticus 19: 14 “do not place a stumbling block before the blind”. We cannot allow these bills to be a stumbling block before our students, keeping them blind to our past or to the realities of how that past brought us to today.

Therefore, Wisconsin Faith Voices for Justice urges you to vote against these bills.

Statement re: Senate Bills 411 and 463

Senate Bill 411 Relating to: anti-racism and anti-sexism pupil instruction and anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees of school districts and independent charter schools. By Senators Jacque, Darling and Nass; cosponsored by Representatives Wichgers, Ramthun, Allen, Behnke, Brandtjen, Dittrich, Gundrum, Horlacher, Knodl, Kuglitsch, Murphy, Neylon, Rozar, Sortwell, Armstrong and Tusler.

Senate Bill 463 Relating to: requiring school boards to make information about learning materials and educational activities used for pupil instruction available to the public. By Senators Stroebel, Darling, Felzkowski, Bradley, Nass, Testin, Wanggaard and Wimberger; cosponsored by Representatives Behnke, Thiesfeldt, Dittrich, Armstrong, Born, Brandtjen, Cabral-Guevara, Callahan, Gundrum, Knodl, Kuglitsch, Magnafici, Ramthun, Sortwell, Tauchen, Tittl, VanderMeer, Wichgers, Zimmerman and Schraa.

I stand opposed to these two Senate bills. There has been confusion and misinformation in the public domain about Critical Race theory and the teaching of the history of the United States.

Critical Race Theory is a paradigm for looking at and studying history with a focus on the impact of the social construct of "race." There are many paradigms from academic disciplines that look at history from those various academic viewpoints, i.e. the free market theory of Adam Smith, struggles of capitalism vs labor posited by Karl Marx, historical critical approaches to religious studies, educational instruction theories, etc. These paradigms do not teach facts and are approaches used to study and critique historical events and approaches to policy. They are academic disciplines in higher education. That is where Critical Race Theory lies: it looks at the impact of that social construct of race and how that construct has impacted social policies, public discourse, cultural values and social relationships.

Teaching history in elementary, middle, and high schools is a different enterprise. Teaching history is intended to create an educated and aware citizenship. As we all have become increasingly aware, our teaching of history in our educational system has not been complete and has often omitted telling of the stories of the indigenous peoples who originally inhabited this land and the stories of free African Americans in the years from 1619 to the Civil War. Our education systems have also often omitted the teaching of the impact of the Jim Crow era and the extent of lynchings, the policies of the New Deal and Post WWII G.I. bill, the removal of Native Americans from their homelands, and the treatment of Chinese and Asian Americans. While avoiding teaching about the impact of diseases brought from Europe on the indigenous of the land and the slaughtering of the native peoples who lived here with the coming of the Europeans and about the horrors of slavery and the treatment of peoples of color, the teaching of history has also not taught about the numerous peoples of European descent who stood for the principles of liberty and equality for all. There were many European descent individuals and groups before and after the Revolutionary War who stood for the Constitutional principles of liberty and equality. The Northwest Ordinance which included the territory of Wisconsin originally prohibited the practice of slavery in the territory.

Teachers need to teach history that includes all peoples of this country and the history of the founding and establishment of this country. Teaching about the genocide of Native Americans and the building of this country on slavery does not necessarily mean that European descent children will feel guilty. Learning history can be uncomfortable, but it also can be empowering in that “when we know better, we do better.” Our children are not responsible for the actions of generations that have come before them and do not need to hold guilt for those actions of the past. But they will be responsible for their actions in the future as an informed electorate. We have an obligation to teach our children complete unbiased, as much as possible, history of our country that includes the contributions of all the citizens of this land. The contributions of peoples from throughout the world have indeed been the strength of this country.

There is a complicated history of inequality and of systemic racism and there has likewise, always been a tension between those truths and the history of individuals and groups that have pursued equality and justice. That is the history we want to teach our children. In the past year, I have heard numerous people say “why weren’t we taught this in school?” as they have learned new information through reading and educational events and programs. We need to indeed teach a more complete history and encourage curiosity. We, as a state, want to develop a creative diverse citizenship, building on the Wisconsin idea that is a leader in education and creates an economy that utilizes the talents of all its citizens.

I hope you will thoughtfully reconsider the current bills and instead encourage the teaching of all of our history as a history to be proud of as our country has struggled to rise to the challenges enshrined in our Constitution. Encouraging the training of teachers to learn and teach all of U.S. history is a more important endeavor for the legislature.

Sincerely,

Mary Z. Nervig

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