

Ellis Testimony SB 189.pdf

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ARTHUR ELLIS, CPA
Legislative District 28
Charles County

ASSISTANT DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Finance Committee

Senate Chair
Joint Committee on the
Management of Public Funds

Chair, Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert
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January 16, 2024

Testimony of Senator Arthur Ellis in Support of Senate Bill 189: Public Schools – Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts – Development of Content Standards and Implementation

Dear Chair Feldman, Madam Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee:

Senate Bill 189 requires that the State Board of Education to develop content standards for inclusive and diverse English language arts to be included in certain State standards for English language arts by December 1, 2025, requires each county board of education to develop and implement certain curriculum guides for inclusive and diverse English language arts, and requires each public school to include inclusive and diverse English language arts in the English language arts curriculum beginning in the 2026-2027 school year.

I urge your favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Yours in Service,


Arthur Ellis – District 28

MLU TESTIMONY SB189 - Public Schools - Inclusive a

Uploaded by: Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

SB0189 - Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation

January 16, 2024

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

My name is Carlos Orbe. I am the Communications and Public Affairs Specialist for Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU). I am writing on behalf of my organization, a statewide network dedicated to supporting and advocating for the Latino and immigrant communities in Maryland. Our mission is to address the disparities and inequities faced by these communities and work collaboratively towards meaningful solutions. In this context, we would like to express our strong support for the Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation as outlined in Senate Bill 189.

At Maryland Latinos Unidos, we firmly believe that education plays a crucial role in promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity within our society. We understand that Senate Bill 189 aims to introduce content standards for inclusive and diverse English language arts, which align with our core values of fostering tolerance, belonging, and equal opportunities for all students, regardless of their background or identity.

The proposed legislation's commitment to highlighting and promoting diversity, including economic diversity, equity, and inclusion, resonates deeply with our mission. We appreciate that these standards will address unconscious bias and economic disparities, both at the individual and societal levels. This approach aligns with our goals of creating safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all students, including those from Latino and immigrant backgrounds.

By requiring each county board of education to develop and implement curriculum guides for inclusive and diverse English language arts, Senate Bill 189 ensures that the materials used in our schools reflect the rich cultural tapestry of Maryland's communities. This will undoubtedly benefit Latino students by providing them with a more inclusive and representative educational experience.

Furthermore, we believe that the implementation of these standards in public schools starting in the 2026-2027 school year will contribute to a more inclusive and equitable education system. This change will benefit not only Latino students but all Maryland students by promoting understanding, empathy, and respect for diverse perspectives and backgrounds.

Maryland Latinos Unidos wholeheartedly supports Senate Bill 189 and commends the State Board of Education and all stakeholders involved in its development. We believe that this legislation represents a significant step toward achieving our shared goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion in Maryland's public schools.

We look forward to continuing to work alongside you and other stakeholders to ensure that all Maryland students, including Latinos and immigrants, have access to an educational system that values their unique backgrounds and experiences. Together, we can create a brighter and more inclusive future for all.

Respectfully,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Carlos Alberto Orbe, Jr.

Carlos Orbe Jr.

189 TESTIMONY Package A.pdf

Uploaded by: Chikamara Obioha

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY PACKAGE 'A'

Coalition Leads

2024

MARYLAND STUDENT COALITION

PACKAGE 'A'

Contents:

Number	Name	Description
1	Chikamara Obioha	Coalition Deputy Director (Student - Howard County) <i>Representative, Howard County Community Action Council</i>
2	Elani Bui	Coalition Deputy Director (Student - Montgomery County) <i>State Affairs Deputy, Montgomery County Regional- SGA</i>
3	Madison Watts	Director of Senior Associates (Student - Montgomery County) <i>Advocacy Initiatives Coordinator, Montgomery County Regional- SGA</i>
4	Arpit Kesharwani	Director of Partnerships (Student - Howard County) <i>Vice President, Howard High School SGA</i> <i>Director of Recruiting, Voter's of Tomorrow in Howard County</i>
5	Chloe Chang	Director of Finances (Student - Montgomery County) <i>Student Coordinator, Make Us Visible Maryland</i> <i>President, Poolesville High School Amnesty International</i>

Collected Testimony Package

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Chikamara Obioha, Director - Maryland Student Coalition (410)599-1815, chikamaraobioha@gmail.com 5209 Spurr Terrace, Ellicott City, MD, 21043
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current senior attending Howard High School, the Deputy Director of the Maryland Student Coalition, and current student representative on the Howard County Community Action Council from Howard County, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

The way we can move forward and make change as a county, state, county, and individuals must start at schools. The youth today are tomorrow's leaders, and diverse education is the gateway to shaping empathic, communicable, and sincere leaders who will serve their constituents. History inherently supports Senate Bill 189, the Civil Rights Act of 194, the 19th Amendment, and the Crime Control Act of 1986 are all landmark statements that justify the means of passing the bill.

From the civil rights movement to the suffrage movement, time and time again, students are subjected to an ever-changing world. A world that must reflect what we learn in schools. Students must be able to practice the same civic engagement they learn in class and that stems from the content they consume in school. English class is the one universal lesson students are taught K-12th, and it is the one class students learn how to engage and communicate with each other. According to the National Institute of Health, the English curriculum has been proven to impact a student's global perspective. The same global perspective they gain from reading and being exposed to diverse literature and perceptive through diverse authors.

If passed, this Senate Bill 189 will enable students to write a new page in our history books. With the implementation of this bill, students will be able to break down the stigma placed around other ethnic and self-identifying groups of people created by systematic discrimination through the silencing of diverse perspectives. Senate Bill 189 will standardize the rules around the English language arts reading curriculum while allowing – within certain boundaries – for customization across locales. In its authentic form, Senate Bill 189 is a supporting tool for both the likes of local jurisdictions and the students they support.

In my own experience as an advocate, I, like many students across the state of Maryland, have witnessed the disparities in the curriculums being taught across Maryland, especially within the

literature we read. Beginning in middle school, I can only recall reading books by white authors. I was subjected to reading literature that only represented my past, not my present. It wasn't until high school that I learned of the marvelous and eye-opening novels of many African-American, Latinos, LGBTQ+, and more POC authors. With each book I read through my time in secondary school, it became overwhelmingly evident to me that students are being taught primarily through a single perspective. Especially after learning of the Carroll County Banned books list that prohibited the teaching of many ground mark novels such as "The Sun and Her Flowers," by Rupi Kaur. The literature I read has made a heavy impact on the individual I have become and I believe prohibiting students from learning about how others live through diverse perspectives is unjust. Members of the committee, *you* can provide the environment that fosters the emotional and social growth of these students. While my own experiences in student advocacy support this idea, I understand not all students in Maryland are given this same treatment.

Soon, we students will be the leaders of tomorrow with our schools, governments, and communities. Giving students the proper education to expand their knowledge of the many experiences that living in Maryland to not afford us allows students to grow into the educated leaders of the tomorrow.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Elani Bui, Deputy Director - Maryland Student Coalition (240)907-9265, elanibui@gmail.com 22620 Sweetspire Dr, Clarksburg, MD, 20871
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current junior attending Richard Montgomery High School, the Deputy Director of the Maryland Student Coalition and current State Affairs Deputy for the Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

Despite living in a world of technology, people are still divided and ignorant about practices different from their own. Literature has been used for centuries as a way to share peoples' cultures and customs, to expand their empathetic capabilities and curiosity, and to provoke thought. Having an English curriculum with media that is representative of the student body is essential to fostering this inclusive community. This is not a matter of just race, but a matter of culture. An Asian American author will write differently than a White one because the Asian author grew up with different experiences that shape their mindset and values. They grew up with different interpretations of familial relations, different ideas of what bullying means, and different goals for the future. If these cultural experiences are never discussed, and Asian children only read White-centric stories, they will feel ostracized by their own experiences. Furthermore, children are denied the opportunity to read in a new style which limits their interpretation of life.

This was my class' exact response when we read *The Namesake* last year. I fell in love with the book since it artfully touched on the immigrant experience for both the first and second generations. I could relate to Gogol as he desperately wanted to suppress his culture but also was irrevocably connected to it, especially during times of grief. However, my White friends hated the book and writing style. They didn't understand why Lahiri would write such an unlikeable character and were frustrated at the slow plot. My first time feeling seen in my English classroom was immediately shadowed by White distaste. We need to address this disconnect early on so that students can fully integrate into society.

The bill aims to represent all minorities including those of different religions, social classes, gender and sexual orientations, and the disabled community. This bill does *not* plan to completely replace the staple literature in English classes such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*. It only asks that minority writers be given a chance to showcase their talent and spread their stories. Maryland is a progressive state, and the passage of SB189 is necessary to progress our future. Maryland is not

alone in this interest. Other states have already taken on codifying diverse curriculums in state law; notably, the state legislatures of Colorado, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New Jersey have worked to pass curriculum regulations that are inclusive of gender and sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, mental and physical disabilities, and religious tolerance.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Arpit Kesharwani, (410) 777-6246, arpit.harsit01@gmail.com
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current 11th-grade student attending Howard High School, the Director of Partnerships of the Maryland Student Coalition, and student representative of the Howard High School SGA, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

As Ralph Lauren, a philanthropist, and businessman, once said, “Books open windows to the world and have the power to transform lives”. Books serve as a way for students to get a “window” to other cultures, ideologies, and perspectives that are in other countries around the world. Students must be given access to diverse literature because it helps broaden their perspectives, cultivate their critical thinking skills, and develop empathy and respect. As the state of Maryland is growing in population and diversity, our students must be aware of other cultures. Currently, schools across Carroll and St. Mary’s counties have banned books that are written on and by diverse authors. By doing this, the students in these countries are unable to be educated on crucial topics and in the future will lack empathy for their colleagues from different cultures. Senate Bill 189 ensures that schools provide students with books that can help them learn about diverse cultures, perspectives, and ideologies.

I immigrated to the United States exactly ten years ago; ever since I have attended several public schools across Maryland. I remember walking into class and being asked questions like, “Why is there a *red dot* on your forehead?” or “Why don’t you celebrate Easter or Christmas like *us*?” or “How did you even move here?”. To my eight-year-old self, those questions made me feel uncomfortable, hesitant, and isolated. School is supposed to be pictured as a safe space for all students, but thousands of immigrant students, including myself, didn’t feel this way. However, Senate Bill 189 can change this and encourage schools to include books from diverse authors. My school primarily limits students to only reading books by Shakespeare, Harper E. Lee, or F. Scott Fitzgerald. If this bill is passed, schools can be encouraged to add books from authors such as Jason Reynolds, Maya Angelou, Rupi Kaur, and many other diverse writers. This will allow students to have a broader understanding of different cultures, identities, perspectives, challenges, and ideologies. In the future, this would allow students from different cultures to feel less isolated and uncomfortable in schools.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Chloe Chang, (301) 605-3132, chloechang630@gmail.com 25369 Damascus Park Terrace, Damascus, MD 20872
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current sophomore attending Poolesville High School, the Director of Finances of the Maryland Student Coalition and Student Coordinator of Make Us Visible Maryland and President of Poolesville High School Amnesty International, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

As the Maryland population continues to grow in diversity, school curricula should adapt accordingly to reflect Maryland's student bodies. Not only do English and language arts classes improve students' understanding of and ability to use written and spoken language, they also improve students' ability to communicate and relate to others. As students speak and write, they also listen to, read, and understand the ideas and experiences of others. A diverse language arts curriculum is crucial for students to develop the empathy, understanding, and cultural awareness needed in today's increasingly diversified world. This bill will allow students to be taught these necessary skills, as well as ensure that school serves as a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students, no matter their background or ethnicity.

As an Korean American student in a predominantly white rural town, I have witnessed firsthand the ignorance that comes with a lack of exposure to diverse stories and education. From microaggressions to blatant discrimination to constantly being asked, "Where are you really from?", my identity as a natural-born American citizen has been questioned and undermined by my peers since kindergarten. Since then, I began to express my individuality and find my voice through writing, which made language arts and English classes consistently my favorite ones. However, with curriculums that never represented my experiences as an Asian American, it became increasingly difficult to enjoy or learn from such classes. It was not until ninth grade that I came across assigned material in class with diversity and Asian American representation — if I ever wanted to read diverse narratives before, I was forced to actively seek out such books outside of school. There are countless minority students who, like me, are underrepresented in their school curriculums, especially the undiversified language arts courses. The passing of this bill can ensure that no student in Maryland will face the ignorance that I and many others struggled with for years.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

SB 189

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Madison Watts, Director of Senior Associates - Maryland Student Coalition (309)429-4066, maddiecassiewatts7@gmail.com 3904 Arbor Crest Way, Rockville, Maryland, 20853
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current junior attending Rockville High School, the Director of Senior Associates of the Maryland Student Coalition, and a current Advocacy Initiatives Coordinator in the Montgomery County Regional Student Government Association, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

The students of Maryland are diverse and the curriculum should represent and align with that dynamic. Engagement and participation are vital in the academic space, but how are students able to reflect on and analyze the content presented if they cannot relate to the information? Having an inclusive and diverse English language arts curriculum will ensure that students feel connected to the content that they are learning and that students are able to exit their secondary education system with sufficient knowledge pertaining to different cultures, identities, and ideas. A diverse and inclusive English Language Arts curriculum will produce empathetic and understanding individuals who are aware of global issues and the issues relating to those around them. The current Eurocentric English Language Arts curriculum is robbing students of this valuable and imperative knowledge.

As an African American student, I have felt severely underrepresented in my English curriculums year after year. I have not felt connected to the information presented in class because it is from the Eurocentric point of view. As a result, I am less interested and less incentivized to understand the information to a larger extent. In school, I read the required content and complete the required tasks but do not take time to appreciate the themes or messages because I feel very disconnected from the information. In fact, the lack of diversity and inclusivity in my English language arts curriculum has prompted me to venture out on my own to find books and content that I can relate to. If I had been presented with diverse topics in my English language arts curriculum earlier in my educational career, I would have had a greater passion for learning and felt included in my studies. School should be the place where students receive quality education on a plethora of topics, including racial diversity, regional diversity, gender diversity, and more. At a place where students are supposed to learn about the world and a wide range of topics, it is unfair to exclude diverse and inclusive topics within the English language arts curriculum. I genuinely and honestly believe that students would benefit from a diverse English language arts curriculum.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

189 TESTIMONY Package B.pdf

Uploaded by: Chikamara Obioha

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY PACKAGE 'B'

Community Members

2024

MARYLAND STUDENT COALITION

PACKAGE 'B'

Contents:

Number	Name	Description
1	Blenda Undrakabold	Student (Howard County)
2	Honna Trinkl	Student (Montgomery County)
3	Jordan Hayes	Student - <i>Student Member of the Calvert County Board of Education</i>
4	Shreya Dinesh	Student (Howard County)
5	Tina Chen	Student (Howard County)
6	Earmays Mitiku	Student (Howard County)
7	Harshit Kesharwani	Student (Howard County)

Collected Testimony Package

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Blenda Undrakhbold - Student, Centennial High School (443)-909-9988, blendaundra1006@gmail.com
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current 11th grader attending Centennial High School, the Director of Partnerships of the Maryland Student Coalition, and president of the Mental Health Club at Centennial High School, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

As an Asian American who grew up in a predominantly white area, it was hard growing up in a classroom where I was the only Asian student among everyone else. People would say my food smelled bad or I had small eyes, and it made me feel like an outcast, something a 3rd grader should never have to experience. I remember wishing I had blonde hair and blue eyes and being insecure to speak to my parents in my native language in front of other students.

Every year, my elementary school would hold a book fair where students were allowed to buy all sorts of books within their interests. One day after school I stumbled upon a picture book where the main character looked like me; an Asian girl with black hair. I picked up the book and read it all in one setting, not only to realize that for the first time, I felt like I wasn't alone in this. Students all over Howard County have faced the same experiences growing up, just like I did, and a simple 10-page book was able to ease my insecure thoughts and emotions. I want this to happen to every Asian American student—to feel like they aren't alone in this. Senate Bill 189 grants the wishes of those who want to feel heard and worthy, to educate others on different cultures and perspectives. If every book we read in English class is written by the same white authors, such as Shakespeare, Harper E. Lee, or F. Scott Fitzgerald, it will fail to recognize and emphasize the importance of other cultures and ideologies. Diversifying the authors can allow *all* students to feel heard, especially the ones who feel like outsiders in their classrooms.

Not only can Senate Bill 189 unify students of all different backgrounds, but it will be able to broaden perspectives of diverse cultures. Reading books from diverse authors such as Jason Reynolds, Maya Angelou, Rupi Kaur, and many other diverse writers can ensure that our Future Generation will grow up in an environment where they can read books from all sorts of different identities, leading them to make the world a better place for those who felt isolated.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Honna Trinkl, Student - Poolesville High School 240-22-4280, britttrinkl@gmail.com 8333 Tea Rose Dr Gaithersburg MD, 20879
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current sophomore attending Poolesville High School and the Recruitment & Retention Manager of Amnesty International, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

I would like to begin by stating that it should be one of the foremost goals of the Maryland government to recognize the sheer amount of diversity in Maryland, which, according to the Washington Post, is the most diverse state on the East Coast. Maryland has over 889,900 students enrolled in its public schools, and after graduation, these students will be exposed not only to Maryland's diversity but also to a globalized world that is becoming increasingly interconnected.

The importance of recognizing this diversity lies in the core values of creating a healthy society that promotes equality and justice. Therefore, a well-rounded education will provide much-needed exposure to rich diversity and help students challenge stereotypes, prejudices, and biases. It also fosters empathy and understanding, contributing to a more inclusive and tolerant society. These are only a few of the benefits of bringing diversity to the authors in our English curriculums. A few others would be the promotion of cultural competence, broadened perspectives, and enhanced learning environments.

With this in mind, it is hard to argue that this inherent heterogeneity should not be represented to the next generation through their education. The future of Maryland students is full of many different people from various backgrounds. To ignore this fact would be to ignore our students' futures. If given the ability to create a better, more tolerant, and inclusive society, it should not be a question to take advantage of it.

As a student at Montgomery County Public Schools, I've seen some diversity in what we learn, but not as much as I'd like. Most of what I've learned about different cultures seems to focus on the most well-known groups or what people consider "normal." What stands out to me is that I've never come across any stories or books written by someone like me – someone who comes from a mixed-race background, just like many people in Maryland.

This lack of representation makes me feel like my experiences aren't fully acknowledged in what we study. It's like my story and the stories of others like me are missing from our English classes. I think

it's important for the school curriculum to include a wider range of voices, including those from mixed-race backgrounds like mine.

I acknowledge that others can relate to their cultural issues being represented, and I don't have an issue with that. However, I find it challenging to see that my own experiences are not reflected in the curriculum. I wish that a younger version of myself could have encountered someone who shared her struggles and life experiences in school. It would have been inspiring and brought a sense of childlike joy to her. Now, all I can do is hope that the passage of this bill will allow a little girl who stands in my shoes to see herself represented in the education she receives.

By including more diverse perspectives, the school can make sure that all students feel seen and understood. It's not just about me – it's about creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone, no matter where they come from or what their background is.

For the above reasons, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Jordan Hayes, Student Member on the Board of Education - Calvert County Public Schools 443-771-6275, Hayesj.stuco@gmail.com 11615 Shoshone Trail, Lusby MD, 20657
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current Junior attending Patuxent High School, the Student Board Member for CCPS, Class President at Patuxent, and one of three Student Workshop Coordinators for the Maryland Association of Student Councils, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

The state of Maryland works hard to maintain local authority over curriculum, which is an absolutely wonderful practice. This allows school systems to cater to their students' needs and interests. But, at times, this ability can cause an issue when it regards the content matter and Origin.

This bill will require all MD students to be exposed to a diverse group of author background, inspiration and information that we have seen filtered or overlooked in some school systems. The role of our education system is to prepare our students for the real world. We cannot do this by allowing them to continue to be deprived of knowledge of the diversity of our Society.

This bill is personally important to me as a Student Board Member. I witness students in the school system who are so incredibly naive to the happenings of the world around them. They lack exposure to current events and topics. This is something the state of Maryland can force a stop to. By requiring a more diverse English curriculum students of Maryland will be more exposed to the rich history, societal perspectives and many other experiences that they have been sheltered to in the past. This bill will open the door for students to read so many previously overlooked books and pieces of writing or speech!

It will be truly refreshing to see a new generation of Maryland students aware of the diversity of our society, especially through great literature.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Shreya Dinesh, Senior Associate - Maryland Student Coalition 240-454-4031, sdines.debate@gmail.com 3263 Eleanors Garden Way, Woodbine MD 21797
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current freshman attending Glenelg High School, a Senior Associate of the Maryland Student Coalition, and the Corresponding Secretary of the Howard County Association of Student Councils, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

This bill is important legally because it supports the inclusiveness of learning about different races, cultures, and ethnicities in Maryland's school system through the advancement of the public school curriculum. Changing the curricula to be more diverse and involve people of all races is something that contributes to upholding the values in laws already passed in our state through other sectors of education; such as History.

The bill stands not only as important legally, but vital to students living in the state of Maryland. When learning about extreme discrimination African Americans faced due to the Jim Crow Laws in history class, students are exposed to acts of horrible racism. From this curriculum, they're able to realize that treating others differently because of the color of their skin isn't okay. Although this curriculum is helpful to these realizations, it should not be the only subject that is. English Language Arts holds just as much weight in shaping how students act and think, through the literature and authors it teaches about. Having a more diverse curriculum would benefit and supplement thoughts of embracing all people.

As a Howard County student brought up by parents who emigrated from India more than twenty years ago, the passing of Senate Bill 189 proves as a major decision for me. To further the acceptance of all ethnicities and backgrounds, the school system must nurture and work to improve the scope of which students like me are being taught every day. English has always been my favorite subject, but as my freshman year has continued, a lack of diversifying authors, and other material being shown in class is noticeable. We have never once learned about or gone through works written by worldly figures such as Mahatma Gandhi or the Dalai Lama. While I realize this subject is being taught in a country already famous for its vast group of successful authors, I still believe we should be highlighting those coming from different countries and nationalities as well. English Language Arts curriculum, especially during this generation, must incorporate core societal principles to public

students when being taught. From a firsthand high school student point of view, what is being taught plays an impactful role in shaping students' views on our differences.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Tina Chen, Maryland Ambassador - Cancer Kids First (443)-854-3655, tchen2228@gmail.com 6624 Huntshire Drive, Elkridge, Maryland, 21075
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current junior attending Long Reach High School, the Maryland Ambassador for Cancer Kids First, and Project manager of Howard County Scholars, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

As an American-born Chinese (ABC) who experienced a significant cultural transition from a predominantly Asian-American area in New York to the diverse landscape of Maryland, I have come to recognize the importance of cultural and racial representation in literature.

This realization became apparent in my school's English Language Arts (ELA) curriculums, where classics by white authors, such as Shakespeare, are normalized and dominate the readings each year. While acknowledging the historical significance of these works, I advocate for a more inclusive approach that introduces literature from diverse authors and backgrounds.

Many educators and scholars agree that exposure to literature representing various cultural perspectives enriches the educational experience, fostering understanding, empathy, and a more comprehensive worldview. I strongly believe that incorporating works from authors of different ethnicities, backgrounds, and experiences into the ELA curriculum will create a more engaging and inclusive learning environment.

This shift will not only benefit students from underrepresented backgrounds but also contribute to the cultural competence of all students, preparing them for engagement with the diverse world beyond the classroom.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Earmyas Mitiku, Student - Long Reach High School 301-242-1939 , e.miti894@gmail.com
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, my name is Earmyas Mitiku. I am writing as a current junior attending Long Reach High School in favor of Senate Bill 189.

As a second-generation Ethiopian American, I have been fortunate to grow up among a diverse community. I believe that being around so many different people has changed my perspective, and taught me to see the value of other cultures. Unfortunately, our diversity as a nation isn't reflected in our education. Minority authors are severely underrepresented in the English curriculum, and I feel that by failing to encourage diversity in our texts, the school system has done a disservice to its students.

SB 189 would signify a shift from the uniformity of the ELA curriculum present in Maryland classrooms to a more diverse and inclusive literature selection that more closely represents our varied cultural makeup. By being exposed to a wider variety of texts, students will be exposed to new, unique viewpoints, providing them with an enriched learning experience. Furthermore, various studies have shown that students feel safer when they see their experiences and cultures represented in society and education.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

January 17, 2024

TO:	Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment; Maryland Senate
FROM:	Harshit Kesharwani, Student - Howard High School (667) 686 76210, harshitkesharwani06@gmail.com 7407 Federline Ln. Ellicott City, Maryland 21043
RE:	SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts
POSITION:	In Favor

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, I am writing as a current 9th grader attending Howard High School, the secretary of the Financial Literacy Club, in favor of Senate Bill 189.

As an Indian who immigrated to the United States when I was only 5 years old, my journey has been shaped by the challenge of trying to fit into a new environment and culture. The bill, SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts, aims to make school books more diverse and relatable. Growing up, I started to feel excluded as people struggled to see me as Asian because they did not know the diverse cultures in Asia. School books did not show diverse authors and perspectives either, which made me feel like I was not important, and invisible.

Having different voices and perspectives in school books is super important. Studies have shown that when someone reads about another culture, we can understand each other more, and think more critically. When we see ourselves in what we are learning, we feel more confident and improve in school. The SB 189 bill can change how we learn in Maryland. By adding more diverse authors to our English classes, we will start to recognize that our world is unique and exciting to learn about because of all the different cultures and backgrounds people come from. This means we can get more interesting and complete education. It is like a whole new door to different worlds because of more diverse books. To support SB 189, it is important to explain things clearly and make sure everyone can feel included. People may not know about diverse cultures in Asia, like India. When we share stories and help others learn more, we can get more people to feel included and not left out. Diverse books help us grow and learn, we can get more people to support the bill and make our schools more welcoming.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189.

Thank you.

SB189 testimony 2024.pdf

Uploaded by: Debi Jasen

Position: FAV

SB 189 - Favorable
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Honorable Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee;

Please give Senate Bill 189, regarding the development of content standards and implementation of inclusive and diverse English Language Arts, a favorable report.

It's no secret that many states and districts in this country have been censoring and outlawing materials that reflect the diversity of the United States of America. A significant percentage of materials that have been eradicated from school curricula and libraries in these states have involved Black, Brown, and LGBTQ+ people, histories, and authors. This outright bigotry should be loudly countered by the actions in our own state. Senate Bill 189 is one way to do so.

I live in Pasadena, Maryland (Anne Arundel County) where there is a long, documented history of racism, and more recent blatant attacks on LGBTQ+ students. Among many in Pasadena, "diversity" and "inclusion" are considered bad things. The group Moms for Liberty has a strong presence in Pasadena, and minoritized students have suffered the brunt of their abuse. Some students have learned to be prejudiced from their parents in this largely insulated community, and have bullied, harassed, and assaulted Black, Brown, and LGBTQ+ students. Creating standards that promote diversity and encourage safe environments for students might help counter the intolerance that some parents teach their children. Additionally, these standards would hinder the actions of the pro-censorship Board of Education members in various Maryland counties.

I urge you to give Senate Bill 189 a Favorable report to improve our education system and better protect children in the schools. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Debi Jasen
Pasadena, Maryland 21122

SB189 2024 - Annapolis Pride.pdf

Uploaded by: Jaden Farris

Position: FAV



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(he/him)

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Jayne Walters
(she/her)

Tim Williams
(he/him)

BILL: Senate Bill 189 - Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation

DATE: January 17, 2024

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT: Jaden Farris | jaden@annapolispride.org

Annapolis Pride's mission is to advocate for, empower, and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community in Anne Arundel County to live fully and authentically. Our vision is a safe, equitable, and anti-racist community where people of all identities thrive.

As such, Annapolis Pride **supports** Senate Bill 189, which would ensure the integration of inclusive and diverse narratives from all genders, races, ethnicities, and identities into Maryland's English language arts curriculum.

Absent from most textbooks and assigned readings, the narratives of historically underrepresented groups remain almost invisible within our curriculum, painting an inaccurate and incomplete picture of the world. This reality underscores the urgency for this legislation, which confirms a commitment to ensuring a diverse curriculum that reflects the rich tapestry of our society.

The benefits of inclusive curriculum extend far beyond mere visibility as the experiences of **all** students are greatly impacted by the inclusion of this information. For instance, narratives that are inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community models enhance LGBTQ+ students' engagement in their schools and provide valuable information about the LGBTQ+ community. Further, students in schools that had LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum (taught positive representations of LGBTQ+ people, history, and events) reported less anti-LGBTQ+ biased language and less anti-LGBTQ+ victimization, were less likely to feel unsafe and to miss school for safety reasons. They also reported having more accepting peers, had higher GPAs, reported a greater sense of belonging, and increased psychological well-being, in comparison to students whose schools did not have an inclusive curriculum.¹

Echoing Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop's metaphor of books as mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors, this legislation will allow all students to peek into diverse realities and step into narratives beyond their own.² Especially for LGBTQ+ students, their stories, transcend mere exploration; they become mirrors reflecting identities long relegated to the shadows.

Accordingly, Annapolis Pride respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on Senate Bill 189.

¹ Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., & Menard, L. (2022). The 2021 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in our nation's schools. New York: GLSEN.

² Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom, 6(3), ix-xi.

SB189 2024 - GLSEN Maryland.pdf

Uploaded by: Jaden Farris

Position: FAV

BILL: Senate Bill 189 - Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation

DATE: January 17, 2024

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

CONTACT: Jaden Farris | chapter@md.glsen.org

GLSEN Maryland, the statewide chapter of GLSEN National, enthusiastically supports Senate Bill 189, which would ensure the integration of inclusive and diverse narratives, particularly those of the LGBTQ+ community, into Maryland’s English language arts curriculum.

As the leading organization centered on creating and sustaining inclusive K-12 education for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) students in the state of Maryland, we believe this legislation is crucial in ensuring that **every** student feels represented and valued in their education.

Research by our parent organization, GLSEN National finds that inclusive curriculum benefits **all** youth, not just LGBTQ+ youth, by improving the overall school climate. Students at schools with inclusive curriculum reported hearing fewer slurs, lower levels of victimization, felt a high sense of belonging, missed fewer days of school, and had a higher GPA in comparison to students whose schools did not have inclusive curriculum.¹ Additional research finds similar patterns among Black LGBTQ+ youth. Further, those attending schools with LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum also felt that their race or ethnicity was more supported at school.²

As children’s literature researcher Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop, poignantly stated: books are more than mere text on pages. They are windows offering glimpses into realities both familiar and strange. They are sliding glass doors, inviting us to step into diverse narratives and walk alongside characters whose experiences may differ vastly from our own.³ Especially for those in the LGBTQ+ community, these books are not just stories—they are mirrors reflecting identities that have been long relegated to the shadows.

Accordingly, GLSEN Maryland respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on Senate Bill 189.

¹ Kosciw, J. G., Clark, C. M., & Menard, L. (2022). The 2021 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of LGBTQ+ youth in our nation’s schools. New York: GLSEN.

² Truong, N. L., Zongrone, A. D., & Kosciw, J. G. (2020). Erasure and resilience: The experiences of LGBTQ students of color, Black LGBTQ youth in U.S. schools. New York: GLSEN.

³ Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom*, 6(3), ix-xi.

Testimony in support of SB0189.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0189_RichardKaplowitz_FAV
January 16, 2023

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#0189 - FAVORABLE

Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#000189, Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation

If the goal of education is to produce engaged and informed citizens equipped to face the challenges of our diverse multi-cultural and multi-racial society this bill will advance those goals. We currently face a crisis in education in which a loud and vocal group wants to censor what is taught and how it is taught according to their religious beliefs. They seem to believe that their views, based on their religious interpretations of how people should live and conduct their lives, is the only acceptable way for the education of children. There seems to be an attempt to suppress children learning about anything that might cause them feelings of inferiority or distress. The preferred method to accomplish this is to sanitize learning and outcomes.

This bill attempts to set standards that will encourage students to learn about diversity in society and how we can mutually create one that is more inclusive, less biased towards others, and acknowledges methodologies to achieve those goals. It will “ENCOURAGE SAFE, WELCOMING, AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL STUDENTS REGARDLESS OF RACE, ETHNICITY, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, MENTAL AND PHYSICAL DISABILITY, AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.” It looks at students as full human beings with all that entails and acknowledges that we have differences as strengths, not weaknesses. It makes learning everything about everything we can a goal instead of suppressing that learning when specific political or religious beliefs would restrict or abandon full participation of every learner in the range of human expression. We cannot, we must not, let those who fear learning about difficult topics will harm a child to dictate that all children, not just their own, be “protected” from that knowledge.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0189.

SB189_MSEA_Lamb_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FWA

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS

Senate Bill 189

Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
January 17, 2024

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports, with amendments, Senate Bill 189. This legislation would develop content standards for inclusive and diverse English Language Arts (ELA) to be included in the State Standards and Frameworks for ELA and require each county board of education to develop and implement age-appropriate curriculum guides for inclusive and diverse ELA, including economic diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Students of all backgrounds deserve to see themselves represented in curricula, an objective that is increasingly urgent as public schools across the country face attacks on the freedom to learn. For too long, content standards have not reflected the diversity of Maryland's student body nor been inclusive of the breadth of experiences and contributions of marginalized groups. Literature and nonfiction texts that examine issues like unconscious bias and economic disparities are important to developing students' critical thinking skills and promoting awareness of experiences different from their own. This bill rightly addresses the importance of developing curricula and resources that highlight diversity in race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, and religious beliefs.

It is critical that updated information is incorporated by revising content standards rather than by expanding the quantity of instruction required. Educators have finite instructional time in the school year, and in improving the accuracy and completeness of instructional content, we must not reduce the overall time available for each standard. We therefore recommend amending the bill to strike the requirement for the State Board to develop additional standards, and instead establish a commission. The commission should include educators and a diverse group of stakeholders that will evaluate standards holistically and develop recommendations to the State Board for the revision of standards. We would further encourage alignment with House Bill 50, which aims to create a similar commission on the study of history, culture, and civics.

Students must have access to a rich, diverse, and inclusive literary canon that accurately reflects history. **We would urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 189 if the above-referenced amendments are incorporated.**

SB189.Council and TheArc.SWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel London

Position: FWA



**Maryland Developmental
Disabilities Council**
CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES



Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SB 189: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation

January 17, 2024

Position: Support with Amendments

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council and The Arc Maryland are statewide advocacy organizations committed to improving the opportunities and outcomes for Marylanders with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). **We support the intent of SB 189, which would require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop content standards for inclusion, diversity, and equity in the language arts curriculum.**

It is important to highlight and promote the diversity of Maryland, including people with disabilities. In fact, over 112,000 students with disabilities receive special education services and supports, and represent 12.4% of the student population in Maryland. That percent is similar to the total population in Maryland.

In order to truly promote diversity and equity, and encourage safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all students, the content of the curriculum should not be limited to considerations for just “mental and physical disabilities.” It should capture the broader community of people with disabilities. Therefore, we strongly recommend the following changes:

- On page 2, line 4 - add “neurodiversity”
- On page 2, line 9 - remove “mental and physical”

It is important that our academic standards are built to reflect the historical and intellectual contributions of diverse populations, and encourage environments that respect and welcome all people, including people with disabilities. **These two changes will do just that.**

Contact: Rachel London, Executive Director, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council,
RLondon@md-council.org

SB 189.Diverse English Content Standards.pdf

Uploaded by: John Woolums

Position: UNF



621 Ridgely Avenue, Suite 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-5414 · 800-841-8197 · Fax: 410-841-6580 · MABE.org

BILL: Senate Bill 189
TITLE: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts - Development of Content Standards and Implementation
DATE: January 17, 2024
POSITION: OPPOSE
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE) opposes Senate Bill 189, which would mandate certain revisions to content standards and curriculum in the teaching of English Language Arts.

MABE generally opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate on curriculum, including the content standards on which curriculum is based, firmly believing that this role belongs to local boards of education in conjunction with the State Board. Therefore, MABE's opposition to this bill does not rest on an evaluation of the merits of teaching any specified subject matter, but rather opposition to statutorily mandating revisions to content standards and curriculum.

In creating the State Board and local boards of education, the General Assembly has delegated to them the responsibility for reviewing and adopting content standards and, at the local level, reviewing and adopting curriculum. The State Board establishes State content frameworks, state assessment standards, and minimum state graduation requirements. Each local board and school system implement locally developed curriculum to ensure that the state content frameworks are followed, student performance standards are met, and students are prepared to meet graduation requirements.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 189.

SB 189 Testimony 1.17.24.pdf

Uploaded by: Suzie Scott

Position: UNF



Senate Bill 189

**Title: Public Schools - Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts -
Development of Content Standards and Implementation**

Hearing Date: January 17, 2024

Position: UNFAVORABLE

Committee: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

Moms for Liberty Maryland opposes SB 189 which would mandate ideological revisions to the content standards and curriculum for English Language Arts.

Moms for Liberty Maryland is troubled by the trend we are seeing from the General Assembly to legislate curriculum. We value the authority of our local boards of education to establish the content standards in conjunction with the State Board of Education and MSDE.

Moms for Liberty adheres to the principle of subsidiarity which holds that social and political issues should be dealt with at the most immediate or local level of government. We oppose all efforts by the General Assembly to wrest local control from our Boards of Education.

For these reasons, we request an unfavorable report.

Suzie Scott, Chair, Moms for Liberty Maryland
Donna Culberson, Vice Chair, Moms for Liberty Maryland

SB 189 - State Board - OPPOSE.pdf

Uploaded by: Zachary Hands

Position: UNF

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 189 – Public Schools – Inclusive and Diverse English Language Arts – Development of Content Standards and Implementation

DATE: January 17, 2024

POSITION: Oppose

Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) respectfully oppose **SB 189**, which would require the State Board to develop content standards for inclusive and diverse English language arts to be implemented in all public schools by the 2026-2027 school year.

We do not oppose the bill based on the merits of the proposed subject matter but on the grounds that the legislative requirement would run counter to the process that is entrusted to the State Board and MSDE.

While the State Board and MSDE are supportive of many of the fundamental principles outlined in the requirements of the bill, both entities are strident in ensuring that the development of curricular standards and frameworks be conducted through the longstanding collaborative process between the State Board, MSDE, local school systems, and stakeholders.

Both the State Board and MSDE are in the process of comprehensively developing a timeline to review and revise a series of existing standards and frameworks. Additionally, MSDE is already required by the Blueprint for Maryland's Future to revise the ELA Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCRS) for alignment to the new College and Career Readiness Standard that the State Board is currently considering for final adoption.

Education Article § 7-202.1, which is part of the Blueprint, requires MSDE to develop, and for the State Board of Education to adopt, a fully aligned instructional system that includes high quality curriculum frameworks. However, the timeline for the revision of all content standards does not align with the new deadline established in SB 189.

Separate processes and timelines for the completion of standards and curriculum revisions that are similar to Blueprint requirements could be counterproductive both to MSDE and to local education agencies. SB 189 would allow for a short timeline for local education agencies to complete the required curriculum development, training, and procurement of new materials.

They will be required to:

- rewrite curriculum guides, including writing, reviewing, and piloting;
- procure new instructional materials aligned to the revised standards and curriculum; and
- train teachers in appropriate teaching pedagogy, implementation of the new curriculum, and implementation of new instructional materials.

MSDE, in partnership with teachers, supervisors, parents, institutes of higher education, and other stakeholders, will continue to undertake significant review of state standards and frameworks. In this process, MSDE will be certain to include our critical partners in the General Assembly.

The State Board requests that the committee consider this information on **SB 189**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.