

To the members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

I am a resident of District 33 and a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. I am testifying in support of SB462 Public Schools – Expanded American History – Development of Content Standards and Implementation.

Our children deserve to learn and our teachers deserve to teach a more robust, comprehensive, accurate, and expanded history of America. We should not allow our education system to teach a one-sided, whitewashed, and narrow version of history. An expanded American History curriculum would go a long way toward giving all of Maryland's students a comprehensive look at our one shared history, while not ignoring the facts or rewriting the ugly and bad parts of our country's history. We need an expanded American History curriculum that recognizes the full contributions of all people, including Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and people from the LGBTQIA+ community, and gives all students an integral part in shaping current events. One way to rectify this is by ensuring that students learn our true and accurate history through an expanded American History curriculum.

Gallagher (1996), in her guide to teachers on teaching history, states that highly selective nationalistic history teaching can create feelings of superiority and “prejudices of all kinds, including stereotypical views of others and even hatred and violence leading to the oppression of others.” p.17 (Source [here](#)).

These are the choices we are presented with.

- 1) Double down on one narrative of American history that expects children to learn and regurgitate a “body of knowledge” shown to be narrow and often mythic, which will convey a notion of white cultural superiority and exceptionalism. With that scenario all students will be harmed. White students will not be prepared for the society they will be entering. Students of color and LGBTQIA+ students will note that people like them are treated as invisible or powerless in US history. As a result, they may be treated as invisible, except for when they are bullied or harassed. None of the students will have learned what is needed to become better informed citizens of a democracy. One wonders if that is the motivation behind wanting to constrict the teaching of history at this moment of time in our nation.
- 2) Redefine school history as learning how to use and interpret evidence. Challenge students to derive their own views by studying multiple perspectives and historical narratives. Teach them to think critically. Share evidence and perspectives that show that the quilt of America has been made with many strands and many hands. This will not only allow students of color and LGBTQIA+ students to see the roles people like them have had in American history, but it will teach all students that all people have value and make contributions. It will also prepare all students for the world they will enter and the democracy that will one day (hopefully) be theirs to preserve.

It's time we choose the path that will make for a better future for all students and for all Marylanders.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in support of SB462.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Sell

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