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Senator Paul Pinsky, Chairman
and Members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
Senate of Maryland, Annapolis, Maryland

RE: **SB 0888** – Establish an American Studies & Social Equity Standards Board – **OPPOSED**

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Committee Members,

The Maryland Federation of Republican Women opposes SB 0888 as written. It calls for the Board to recommend content and instructional methods to challenge racist, sexist, gender or ability assumptions, attitudes, and behaviors.

However well intentioned, this bill promotes further division rather than harmonious efforts that would unite our nation. The bill calls for challenging assumptions, attitudes and behaviors but makes no mention of documenting and acknowledging the positive progress that has been made since the 1970s in ending racist and sexist behavior and practices.

The bill requires the use of the principles and practices of restorative justice, including disciplinary action. Wikipedia describes “restorative justice” as an approach to justice where one response to a crime could be a meeting between the victim and the offender. The goal is to share their interpretation of what happened, to discuss the harm resulting from the offense, and to come to a consensus on how to repair that harm. This could include payment of money, an apology, or other actions to compensate those affected and/or prevent the offender from causing future harm.

Page 5 lines 24-25 call for a welcoming learning and social environment, while a restorative justice approach could subject a student to unfounded accusations without an opportunity to defend and could subject them to ridicule in the classroom. Freedom of thought would be jeopardized. A child with beliefs outside the “norm” or the “new norm” could be pressured to admit an offense that doesn’t exist or, worse yet, be silenced.

Page 5 lines 22-23 require that a model policy promote an overarching focus and participation in the racially, culturally, and socially diverse global community. The United States Census conducted in 2020 recognized 5 races (White, Black/African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander) and 2 ethnicities (Hispanic/Latino and not Hispanic/Latino) yet the Board’s community members detailed on page 3 at lines 9-28 do not include a member of the Caucasian race. Page 3 lines 25-26 call for a member from the Middle Eastern community. “Middle Eastern” is not a federally defined race or ethnicity nor is “Middle Eastern community” defined in the bill.

While we agree with the goal of a diverse community free of bias and welcoming to all, the provisions of this bill will not accomplish that.

Please give SB 0888 an **UNFAVORABLE** report.