

**SB0364.pdf**

Uploaded by: Amy Willey

Position: FAV

I support SB0364 because a relationship between school & home is crucial to all child development, of any age. There should be a marrying between the two because these are our children, not the state's. We as parents have a right to know and to counter what is being taught in schools.

# Support SB0364.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Fold

Position: FAV

Please support bill SB0364 - Parent's right to challenge curriculum act. The right of parents to challenge their child's curriculum is essential to ensure there is accountability and that parents' voices are heard. Please vote FOR this bill. Thank you.

**SB 364 Senator Bryan Simonaire\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kara Contino

Position: FAV

**BRYAN W. SIMONAIRE**  
*Legislative District 31*  
Anne Arundel County

—  
MINORITY LEADER  
—

Education, Health, and  
Environmental Affairs Committee

*Subcommittees*

Chair, Alcohol

Health  
—

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and  
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area



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11 Bladen Street, Room 423  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3658 · 301-858-3658  
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Bryan.Simonaire@senate.state.md.us

*The Senate of Maryland*  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Written Testimony in SUPPORT of SB 364**

Chairman and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, I am here to introduce and voice my support for Senate Bill 364 – *Anne Arundel County – Board of Education – Parent’s Right to Challenge Curriculum Act*.

Senate Bill 364 would authorize a parent or guardian to sponsor, sign, and circulate a petition to challenge the use of certain curriculum taught in Anne Arundel County Public Schools. The bill would establish requirements for petitions, public hearings, a vote, and public notices of processes and hearings.

# **Senate Bill 0364\_ KAGillespie Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Kerry Gillespie

Position: FAV

## **Senate Bill 0364: Anne Arundel County - Board of Education - Parent's Right to Challenge Curriculum Act**

Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Kerry Gillespie, I am an Anne Arundel County resident and a proud mama bear of 4 children.

I would like to start by thanking Senator Simonaire for sponsoring this vital bill.

According to Mahatma Gandhi; "Every home is a university and the parents are the teachers". Bill SB0364 is necessary because schools are not the only place our children learn. As a daughter of a former teacher, I know how unquestionably valuable educators and schools are to our children. However, parents are their children's first, foremost and forever teachers.

To most parents, the education our children receive in public schools should primarily encompass the "3 R's"; reading, writing and arithmetic. Before Covid lockdowns and school closures, even the most involved guardians like myself, whose faces were known in school buildings, trusted that this was the education our children were receiving in school.

However, the more our homes became our children's classrooms the past two years, the more we came to know the truth about what was in our children's curriculum. As parents became backup educators, many of us were horrified to find what our children were actually learning in school.

What our schools are either choosing or being forced to teach in the curriculum is many times actually the responsibility of the home. Of course, children need to have basic manners and respect for all reinforced within the school walls. But the role of parents in many aspects of our children's educational curriculum has been fundamentally cut off in many ways. Morals, ethics, and values must be lived, cultivated, and reinforced daily in the home, and are personal family choices based on many factors including religious, spiritual and political beliefs. These are not issues to be solely taught in schools.

It is a basic parental right to have a voice in our children's education. Allowing parents to create petitions against potentially problematic curriculum gives us a say in their education and creates a system of checks and balances to hold the creators of curriculum accountable.

Nothing is more reflective of the outcome of a student's performance in school than parental involvement. Therefore, a school's greatest resource to ensure success in their student body is to partner with parents and guardians in all aspects, including curriculum creation. After all, as Philosopher George Santayana said, "A child educated only at school is an uneducated child."



# 2022 SB364 testimony pdf.pdf

Uploaded by: Debi Jasen

Position: UNF

I am writing to request that you give Senate Bill 364 an UNFAVORABLE report.

I live in Anne Arundel County. In fact, I live in Pasadena - Senator Simonaire's district. This is the land of Confederate flags and conspiracy theories. One conspiracy theory is that Critical Race Theory is being taught in the schools, yet the people who make such claims can't even explain what CRT is (Pasadena's own Board of Education representative also can't, but fundraised out of fear of it anyway.) It seems that Sen. Simonaire is more interested in entertaining those ignorant conspiracy theorists than in protecting the students from racism and anti-LGBTQ+ bias.

Please see this page where some students at Chesapeake High School in Pasadena share their stories about those experiences of bigotry:

<https://www.instagram.com/changeforchesapeake/>

I've watched many Anne Arundel County Board of Education meetings. They are swamped with work, including numerous Covid-related issues. And now Senator Simonaire wants to add additional work from a bunch of parents who don't have the faintest clue about what they're talking about? Having homeschooled his own children, Sen. Simonaire is perfectly aware of that option for parents who dislike that their children are learning about the histories of Black people or the Holocaust, and that they have to take the Global Citizenship course. <https://www.aacps.org/globalcitizenship>

And what would the county BOE do about state-mandated curriculum being challenged? Why should they have to take their time to consider whether to continue using it when they don't even have a choice in the matter?

We've seen throughout this country that states and schools are banning books, curriculum, and discussion because of their own racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism. This shouldn't even be entertained.

What does Senator Simonaire mean in his bill when he specifies:

"WHEREAS, Parents and guardians of students attending public schools in Anne Arundel County demand the ability to appeal curriculum that is divisive, antipatriotic, age-inappropriate, explicitly sexual in nature, promotes radical ideology, or is harmful to the student's overall educational environment..."

Would that include teaching about chattel slavery, since it demonstrates that the United States hasn't always been just? Is such a claim "antipatriotic"?

What about teachers mentioning that Dr. King said:

"We must recognize that we can't solve our problem now until there is a radical redistribution

of economic and political power... this means a revolution of values and other things. We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together... you can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others... the whole structure of American life must be changed. America is a hypocritical nation and [we] must put [our] own house in order."

- Report to SCLC Staff, May 1967.

Is that the sort of "radical ideology" that Sen. Simonaire is afraid of even mentioning? Would it only be permissible to talk about a whitewashed version of King's "I have a dream" speech, and nothing else?

Couldn't any discussion of current events be considered "divisive"?

"Explicitly sexual in nature"? What does that even mean? Is he talking about health class? Is he talking about having books about the existence of LGBTQ+ people on the shelves? Is he talking about James Baldwin and Bayard Rustin being gay, and the teachers better not say anything about it? Is he talking about "Maus"?

Is it Senator Simonaire's goal to erase the existence of people in this country, people throughout history, and even students in the schools?

Like I said, a number of people in Pasadena display Confederate flags. This includes one across the street from a middle school (a middle school that was named after a segregationist, by the way, yet many community members opposed the renaming of it because they didn't consider it a bad thing to have a school named after a segregationist.) Under this bill, Pasadena residents (and I'm sure others in the county) could petition the county BOE to stop teaching the truth about the Civil War. I've actually come across people here who call it "the war of northern aggression." Recently, a student wore a Confederate flag to Chesapeake High School. Is there any doubt that his parents encouraged that?

Entertaining the level of bigotry that this bill would welcome at public Board of Education meetings would be traumatic to many people in the student body. A bill that claims to protect children would actually lead to great harm.

Anne Arundel County has worked very hard the past few years to battle the bigotry within the schools. There have been numerous public meetings about addressing bigotry, and the schools have an Office of Equity and promote Culturally Responsive Teaching (not to be confused with Critical Race Theory.) Anne Arundel County schools have made great progress, and this bill could lead to a reversal of that.

Please give SB364 an Unfavorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Debi Jasen  
1127 Holmespun Dr.  
Pasadena, MD 21122

**Draft SB 364 testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Isabella Shycoff

Position: UNF



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Isabella Shycoff  
(she/her)

February 16, 2022

## SB 364 - Anne Arundel County - Board of Education - Parent's Right to Challenge Curriculum Act

### Position: Oppose

We, the board of directors of Annapolis Pride, strongly oppose SB 364.

SB 364 applies only to Anne Arundel public schools, and establishes a method of petition to question and potentially overturn curriculum already determined appropriate by expert educators and approved by members of the county's elected with the Board of Education members.

We oppose this legislation, as we believe it is redundant and creates undue administrative burdens for our educators. Concerned citizens have ample means to communicate their issues with the board, through regular board and committee meetings, and directly with the individual members of the board.

Disguised as allowing for "parental involvement," We believe this bill is only meant to fan the flames of ignorance and intolerance among certain factions within the Anne Arundel County AA Co community.

We continue to see growing examples of hate and intolerance in our schools, and believe that teachers, administrators and the BOE officials are serving in increasingly challenging and divisive times. They deserve the community's support to make the school setting a safe, inclusive and productive learning environment.

We must trust our educators to make determinations on curriculum based on their professional expertise. They must not have their hands tied due to a few loud voices of some small-minded parents. Teachers and administrators are the experts in education and we must give them the latitude to make decisions based on what's best for their students. Either we trust them or we don't.

**We strongly urge an unfavorable report on SB 364.**

# **SB364 AA Board Parent's Rights 2.16.22.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jeanette Ortiz

Position: UNF



## SB364 ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY - BOARD OF EDUCATION - PARENT'S RIGHT TO CHALLENGE CURRICULUM ACT

February 16, 2022

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### OPPOSE

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **SB364 Anne Arundel County - Board of Education - Parent's Right to Challenge Curriculum Act**. This bill authorizes a parent/guardian in Anne Arundel County to sponsor, sign, and circulate a petition to challenge the use of certain curriculum in a course taught in a public school in Anne Arundel County. The bill also establishes requirements for the contents of a petition, public hearings, a vote on the subject of a certain petition, and public notice of certain processes and hearings.

AACPS opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate local public school curriculum. The authority to establish curriculum and assessments is the domain of the State Board of Education and the local boards of education, the same entities charged with researching, investigating, and evaluating both curriculum and assessments. Maintaining this authority with the Maryland State Board of Education and local boards allows local boards of education to collaborate with the State and stakeholders to ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable.

AACPS is committed to an ongoing and thorough review of curricula and materials of instruction to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion are promoted and evident. AACPS has a committee that reviews curriculum and materials of instruction. Representatives from all stakeholder groups including parents/guardians, teachers, and students are included in the review process. New courses are presented to the Board for review and approval.

This proposed legislation would usurp the authority of the Superintendent and the Board to establish curriculum and to select materials of instruction as currently authorized by State law. This bill would interfere with local authority to develop and approve curriculum in accordance with State Board of Education content standards. Section 4-111 of the Education Article provides that "Subject to the applicable provisions of this article and the bylaws, basic policies, and guidelines established by the State Board, each county board, on the written recommendation of the county superintendent, shall (1) Establish curriculum guides and courses of study for the schools under its jurisdiction..." Under the banner of this State authority, the statute requires the local superintendent to "prepare and recommend for adoption by the county board: (1) Curriculum guides; (2) Courses of study; (3) Resource material; and (4) other teaching aids in accordance with Section 4-205 of the Education Article.

It is also important to note that the Blueprint for Maryland's Future requires the Maryland State Department of Education to develop curriculum standards and resources for each subject at each grade level, that build on one another in logical sequence, in core subjects that may be used by local school systems and public school teachers. Finally, this legislation is unnecessary as the public may contact the Superintendent and the members of the Board with any concerns regarding AACPS curriculum. Parents/Guardians, students, and members of the community also have the opportunity testify at regularly scheduled public meetings of the Board.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on SB364.



**Oppose SB0364 (2022).pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Sell

Position: UNF

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 opposition to SB364** Anne Arundel County - Board of Education - Parent's Right to Challenge Curriculum Act.

I oppose efforts by our elected officials to deny our students access to our true, shared histories by authorizing parents or guardians to sponsor, sign, and circulate a petition to challenge the use of certain curriculum in a course taught in a public school in Anne Arundel County. According to the 2020 US Census, the population of Anne Arundel County is 64.19% White, 17.76% African American, 9.65% Hispanic, .4% Indigenous, 4.34% Asian, and .08% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander. If this bill passes, this would mean that white parents will have more of a say in the curriculum; they would be able to challenge the Culturally Responsive curriculum as well as the new elective courses on African American history in Anne Arundel County and LGBTQ+ studies; and it would give parents more authority than teachers who have the knowledge and skills of how and what to teach.

On October 18, 2021, there was a Board of Education Workshop on Civics & Social Topics in the classroom. The presenters said that the Anne Arundel County Public School System is using Culturally Responsive Teaching and that students are learning the truths of our history (the good, bad, and the ugly). I would like this to continue because I believe our students are capable of facing uncomfortable truths with understanding and compassion.

Students deserve to be provided with honest, up-to-date education. This bill would not allow that.

Students should be equipped to solve our nation's problems by examining and learning from its mistakes rather than repeating them. This bill would not allow that.

Teachers should be able to teach the truth about our history, including the facets of this country's history that have been erased, such as the five known extrajudicial lynchings that took place right here in Anne Arundel County. This bill would not allow that.

Teachers should be able to find age-appropriate ways to tell hard truths about our country's past and present. This bill would not allow that.

Teachers should be able to provide students with the education they deserve, including one that acknowledges pressing real world problems like police violence and equips students with the practical skills and conceptual tools needed to address them. This bill would not allow that.

Schools should have the resources to meet every child's needs including well-trained and supported teachers and a curriculum that helps them reckon with our nation's past and reshape our nation's future. This bill would not allow that.

I believe that those who want to challenge the curriculum do not believe students deserve any of this or that teachers should teach the truth. I hope the Maryland General Assembly does not succumb to those forces in our County who are against Culturally Responsive Teaching. I implore you to rise above the pull of not allowing teachers to teach the truth and to rise above the rhetoric that says our children can't handle it, that our teachers can't handle it, that our parents can't handle it. We can handle the truth. In fact, it is one of the things that will set us all free.

There are those in the community who are against teaching that tells the truth of our shared history and the truth about systemic racism because they believe it makes white people feel inferior, it makes white people feel like we are being adversely treated, and it makes white people feel responsible for actions committed by other white people. The fact is that the truth hurts and systemic racism hurts all of us. Resmaa Menakem, author of *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, and Heather McGhee, author of *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone*

*and How We Can Prosper Together*, make it clear in their books that racism hurts all of us and we would do well to fix it by learning about, acknowledging, and then fixing the problem together. This might feel bad to those of us who are socialized as white and trigger our white fragility. However, this should not be challenged. Rather it should be embraced. In fact, white people would do well to work through our fragility, develop resilience, and endeavor to grapple with rather than hide the truth. If we do this, perhaps, we can finally stop repeating the past and we can make Anne Arundel truly the best place for all: free of hate and bias and with justice and liberty for all.

Finally, this bill only applies to Anne Arundel County. Why? Because the Anne Arundel County Council voted against a resolution that had a similar intent. This is an end run around the Anne Arundel County Council on a decision that should be made by the representatives of the residents of Anne Arundel County.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to **oppose SB364**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Sell  
Severna Park, MD

**SB 0364 Oppose.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Jasen

Position: UNF

I oppose Senator Simonaire's bill, 0364, titled "Anne Arundel County – Board of Education – Parent's Right to Challenge Curriculum Act"

As a resident of Pasadena, District 31, which Senator Simonaire claims to represent, this bill should not be given a favorable recommendation, for so many reasons.

First, under Section 2, this bill purports to be an emergency bill, "necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health or safety" -- there is no immediate threat to health and safety, so filing SB 0364 as such is a charade and a publicity stunt.

Second, I would point out, much as any other Board of Education in the state of Maryland, Anne Arundel County has serious issues to address -- my incomplete list would include: adequate pay for teachers and staff; staffing levels; transportation issues; and the continuing ever-present threat of COVID-19. Burdening them with the additional baggage of curriculum review would grind progress on other, more pressing issues, to a halt.

Third, the 3% requirement is inconsistent with the Anne Arundel County charter, requiring 10% a referendum on county actions.

Before I get to the fourth point, I would like to note that there are approximately 84,000 students in Anne Arundel County schools.

Point four, forcing a vote on any issue that violates the following ridiculous claims would require one parent to initiate it, and 3% of the parents to support it, which would be approximately 2520 valid signatures:

"The Earth is flat"

"Creationism is valid science"

"Arabic numbers should not be taught in schools"

"Trump won the 2020 election"

"CRT (Critical Race Theory) is being taught in schools"

"Jan 6. 2020 was a legitimate protest"

"Masks don't work"

"The vaccine is a secret government program to microchip us all"

Fifth, and finally, when I examine legislation, I consider how it can be turned against its initial intent. Using that lens, I would fully expect any curriculum that did not include the following to be repeatedly challenged:

"Science is real"

"Masks work"

"The COVID 19 vaccines are effective"

"Trump won the 2016 election through Russian influence"

"Jan 6, 2020 was an attempt by the minority party to establish a dictatorship"

"Accurate history must be taught, including our abuses of the Black, Native, Japanese, Chinese, and other minorities in the United States"

“LGBTQ are people”

In short, I would expect passage to bog down the Anne Arundel County Board of Education in a constant barrage of petitions, often contradictory to one another, and be unable to perform their duties in maintaining and advancing education in our county.

I am happy to discuss any particular point at length.

--

John Jasen  
Pasadena, MD

**testimony to MD GA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Julie Grignon

Position: UNF

February 16, 2022

Maryland General Assembly

Dear Representatives:

I am writing to ask that you vote against the “Parent’s Right to Challenge Curriculum Act.” As a parent with children in the public schools and as a professional in the field of education, I strongly oppose this act. Education is about exposing individuals to information and teaching them how to think critically about that information. Well educated groups of professionals build curriculum with this goal in mind. As a parent, I may have opinions on some of the information that is presented to my child, but I still want them exposed to that information in school. Children learn by being exposed to many perspectives on a topic and this comes from school, home, and their community. I do not believe that parents should be attempting to censor the information that professional educators deem important to the learning process. Educators spend years learning how to present information in a way that supports multiple perspectives and critical thinking. We must trust our educators to build quality curriculum that exposes students to challenging topics. We must not allow parents to break down that process because they have a bias opinion regarding that information. Please vote against this bill.

Thank you,

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

Julie L. Grignon, Ph.D.  
410-279-6479



**2022 SB 0364 - UNFAVORABLE.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ken Phelps

Position: UNF



# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 0364:

### Public Schools – Expanded American History – Development of Content Standards and Implementation **\*\*UNFAVORABLE\*\***

February 16, 2022

**TO:** Hon. Paul J. Pinsky, Chair, Hon. Cheryl Kagan, Vice Chair and the members of the Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

**FROM:** Rev. Kenneth O. Phelps, Jr., Co-Chair, Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network, Diocese of Maryland

**DATE:** February 16, 2022

As we have consistently testified in the hearings held in support of the development of African-American history, we have nothing to fear in teaching a complete history of the United States which includes both the achievements of and injustices suffered by a significant percentage of our population and their ancestors.

Do children in Germany suffer because they learn about the Holocaust? Or white South African children because they learn about apartheid? Without an honest accounting of our past, how can any path into a unified future be possible? It is time to lay aside fear – and more importantly, disingenuous and calculated election year tactics – and embrace the lessons that history can teach us.

In 2006, the General convention of the Episcopal Church, USA passed Resolution 2006 – A127 which stated in part;

“[t]hat in the spirit of inclusion, dioceses also be invited to determine whether their call is to conduct truth and reconciliation processes in regard to other histories and legacies of racial discrimination and oppression that may be applicable in their geographic area, while not diminishing the strong call to focus on the history and legacy of slavery;”

In addition, resolution 2006 – C011, stated in part; the General Convention “urge[d] the Church at every level to call upon Congress and the American people to support legislation initiating study of and dialogue about the history and legacy of slavery in the United States...”



# THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF MARYLAND

The Episcopal Church has acknowledged its complicity in creating and sustaining the institution of slavery, and by its resolutions has underscored the importance of telling this story as part of the larger story of the African experience in America, and how this truth-telling is vital to our work of reconciliation.

In convention in November of 2021, the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland overwhelmingly passed a resolution in support of HB 0047. We support this resolution because it is about truth, without which there can be no reconciliation and without which we can never be set free from the insidious grip of our past.

And that is a truth which begs to be heard in the form of the sacred stories of so many who were participants in our history and whose legacies have been denied. Including, I might add, Frederick Douglass, who in spite of his relentless pressure on Lincoln and the influence that he and others like Harriet Tubman exerted on the President's policies concerning slavery, does not appear in Steven Spielberg's biographical film, *Lincoln*, which speaks volumes about the way African-American contributions to history are still being ignored.

Personally, I am ashamed to admit that I did not learn about the Tulsa Massacre until I was in my forties – and I was a US History major in college. Or that I never knew the stories of activist Claudette Colvin, or aviator Bessie Coleman, or that I might have spent my childhood pretending that I was Bass Reeves, one of the greatest lawmen the wild west ever knew.

I do not want that to be my grandson's regret. I want him to celebrate the fullness of who we are as a people - the triumphs and the horrors – because History without truth is a fairytale at best, and propaganda at its worst. And as is the case with all sin, too many have suffered at the hands of those who have owned our past to the benefit of too few and the oppression of far too many.

The Diocese of Maryland request an unfavorable report.

# **OPPOSE SB364 AACo parents right to challenge.pdf**

Uploaded by: Linnie Girdner

Position: UNF

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

I am a resident of District 21 and a member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Annapolis and Anne Arundel County. I am testifying **in opposition to SB364 Anne Arundel County - Board of Education - Parent's Right to Challenge Curriculum Act.**

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Resmaa Menakem, author of *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*, and Heather McGhee, author of *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, make it clear in their books that racism hurts all of us and we would do well to fix it by learning about, acknowledging, and then fixing the problem together. This might feel bad to those of us who are socialized as white and trigger our white fragility. However, this should not be challenged. Rather it should be embraced. In fact, white people would do well to work through our fragility, develop resilience, and endeavor to grapple with rather than hide the truth. If we do this, perhaps, we can finally stop repeating the past and we can make Anne Arundel truly the best place for all: free of hate and bias and with justice and liberty for all.

Finally, this bill only applies to Anne Arundel County. Why? Because the Anne Arundel County Council voted against a resolution that had a similar intent. This is an end run around the Anne Arundel County Council on a decision that should be made by the representatives of the residents of Anne Arundel County.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to oppose SB364.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda Girdner  
941 Fall Ridge Way  
Gambrills, MD 21054

**SB 0364 testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rachelle Tannenbaum

Position: UNF

I am writing today to express my opinions *against* SB 0364, the “Parent’s Right to Challenge Curriculum Act.” This bill is nothing more than an attempt to keep children from learning an accurate history of our country, or from learning beneficial, accurate information about health and sexuality.

I have a PhD in psychology professor, with a specialization in child development. In my expert opinion, I can tell you that when children feel left out of the school curriculum – such as when the school refuses to acknowledge their gender identity or sexual orientation, or that of their parents or loved ones – this increases the odds of both mental health problems and risky behaviors. Learning about LGBTQ+ people, or sharing information about birth control, or talking about healthy sexual relationships is not going to lead to risky behavior or a change in one’s gender identity or sexual orientation, any more than talking about seat belts leads people to stop wearing them.

In terms of history, this is not my area of professional expertise. However, as the White parent of three children in county schools (grades K, 4, and 6), I *want* my children to learn the full history of the US – the good, the bad, and the ugly. Proponents of this bill may talk about certain concepts as “divisive” or “unpatriotic,” but really they just mean “anything that challenges an idealistic view of the US as a happy place for all.” Well, it hasn’t been, and it isn’t now, and denying reality won’t change that. It is our civic and moral obligation to give teachers the tools and resources they need to help our children learn about and grapple with those ugly truths, as this is the only way that we can move forward and truly make Anne Arundel County a welcoming place for all. When my children get to be high school age, I would be proud if they were to choose the new African American history elective. What would make me even happier, though, is if that elective became unnecessary because African American history was interwoven into the standard curriculum.

I can understand why parents would want to know what their children are learning. I do too! That’s a healthy part of the educational process. But why would we give parents the right to randomly challenge the expertise of those teachers and educational leaders who have devoted their careers to learning and implementing best practices for our children, any more than we should have the right to randomly trigger investigations into county planners about the placement of traffic lights?

My last reason for opposing this bill is that it is clearly meant as an end run around the County Council, who already voted down a similar proposal. There is no other good reason for Senator Simonaire to waste the state legislature’s time on a bill that applies only to Anne Arundel County.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to oppose SB364.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Thank you,

Rachelle Tannenbaum  
Annapolis, MD