

MARYLAND STUDENT COALITION

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TESTIMONY

BILL: House Bill (HB) 489 - Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education

SPONSOR: Delegate Acevero, *Montgomery County (39)*

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Monday, February 7, 2022

HB 489: Favorable

The Maryland Student Coalition is an entirely student-led, advocacy group that serves to bring students together to promote education policy reform. Founded in 2020 as a vehicle for advocating for students' right to demonstrate, our scope has since expanded to include more educational advocacy initiatives. You can learn more at marylandstudents.org

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Washington, and honorable members of the Ways and Means Committee.
The Maryland Student Coalition is in favor of House Bill 489.

This bill establishes a Commission within the Maryland State Department of Education with a diverse membership in order to examine the contributions of different underrepresented groups in Maryland history and make recommendations for content and programs that reflect these examinations.

For too long, considerations of diversity and education have often been relegated and not taken seriously. Students, particularly students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and differently abled students deserve representation of these groups to better understand how people of all backgrounds have contributed to Maryland's history, and in some cases, been wronged or underserved by the communities they call home. Even students who are not members of an underrepresented community benefit greatly from being exposed to a true picture of Maryland history, an essential part of understanding the origins of our modern systems. Having a stakeholder commission whose primary focus is to advance this representation will bolster existing efforts to promote diversity and ensure that all students have access to this important information as a part of a high-quality education.

The Maryland Student Coalition strongly supports the diversification of the school curriculum and has been pushing for similar legislation this session. The Maryland Student Coalition has been a close partner

in the development of Senate Bill 116, which will direct MSDE to diversify ELA curriculum for grades 6 through 12. The Bill is currently awaiting a vote in the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee.

It is imperative that Maryland students have access to education programming that reflects an accurate history of the many contributions of underrepresented groups in our history. Moreover, it is critical that those recommending these programs are truly reflective of these groups. Thus, it is to this end that we, Maryland Student Coalition, support the principles within the legislation and strongly encourage issuing a **favorable** report on HB 489.