

Written Testimony for **HJ 005/SJ 005**: Elementary and Secondary Education - Curriculum - Importance of Diversity - Please **VOTE NO** on this House Joint Resolution.

Dear Rules & Executive Nominations Committee:

This Resolution has erroneous statements that are simply political, arbitrary and biased.

The bill's synopsis states "Acknowledging the importance of teaching a culturally diverse curriculum in elementary and secondary schools in the State; providing that curricula taught in elementary and secondary schools should include the history of communities that have experienced discrimination; and affirming the State of Maryland's commitment to a complete education." I agree that our schools should teach a diverse curriculum in all our schools. The statement "history of communities that have experienced discrimination" is arbitrary and biased. Where is the evidence of this? This is a political statement or phrase that is not substantiated in any way. I certainly do not remember any lessons that were discriminatory when I was in public school.

The bill further states " WHEREAS, Curricula taught in Maryland's elementary and secondary schools has continuously underrepresented communities that have experienced discrimination." Again, where is the evidence of that? Please provide examples where any group was underrepresented in any lessons in our public schools. Again, I certainly do not remember any group feeling underrepresented when I attended public school in Maryland. This is simply another political statement.

"...WHEREAS, It is crucial to address the issue of representation and inclusion in education to ensure that all children have an equal opportunity to receive a complete education." Please provide examples of any children that do not have "an equal opportunity to receive a complete education." Also, there is no definition of a "complete education". What does a "complete education" include? Even when my children attended school, I did not see or hear anything about any child not having an equal opportunity to receive a complete education, except possibly special education students. Children in non-special education classrooms have been given Chromebooks to assist in their education. Where is there a child that was specifically discriminated against by **not** giving them a Chromebook or other materials so that there wasn't "an equal opportunity to receive a complete education"? Children do **not** need to receive any information from our school system about "diversity" in order to have a "complete" academic education.

“WHEREAS, Curricula taught in elementary and secondary schools that includes the experiences of communities that have been subject to discrimination can help cultivate empathy and compassion.” Please include links to well-documented studies that demonstrate a direct correlation between “Curricula taught in elementary and secondary schools that include the experiences of communities that have been subject to discrimination...” and this curricula helping to cultivate empathy and compassion. Empathy and compassion can be “cultivated” in the home, in a child’s religious upbringing, in a child having friends from diverse and different backgrounds, etc. There are many other sources from which “empathy and compassion” can be “cultivated”. Please demonstrate where public school curricula is the ONLY source from which children can be taught “empathy and compassion.” When you make blanket statements such as this, you mislead the public into thinking and believing that our public schools can achieve social change via the curricula, and that is not realistic or even true, and achieving social change is NOT the responsibility of our schools in the first place.

WHEREAS, Curricula taught in elementary and secondary schools that includes the experiences of communities that have been subject to discrimination can help break down stereotypes and prejudices that translate into real world harms”. The same reasoning from the previous paragraph can be used for this statement as well. Please provide a direct correlation that the curricula in our public schools can DIRECTLY “help break down stereotypes and prejudices...” Again, stereotypes and prejudices can be broken down by what is taught in the child’s home, by the teachings in the child’s religious upbringing and from children having friends from different, diverse backgrounds outside of school. Also, please provide DIRECT evidence that public school curricula translate into decreasing “real world harms”. Making such a bold statement needs to be directly substantiated by “real world” data that directly proves a decrease in “real world harms”.

“RESOLVED, That it is the policy of the State of Maryland that curricula taught in elementary and secondary schools encompass groups of people that have experienced discrimination based on their disability, ethnicity, gender, indigenous American Tribal affiliation, race, religion or faith, and sexual orientation...” Again, this is a nice, political statement, but it is untrue and certainly not “resolved”. I haven’t seen any curricula that encompassed “religion or faith” specifically when I my attended school, and my youngest children graduated in 2022. I do not remember any Christian curricula that encompassed what was taught at home or at church. So does that mean that I was discriminated against and that I was underrepresented or even unrepresented? Do we need to include curricula that encompass “religion or faith” into our children's daily education? I would love to review some curricula that encompass “religion or faith”.

“RESOLVED, That the State of Maryland is committed to providing robust civic, cultural, and history education so that its citizens are engaged and informed members of our community.” When and where has it ever been stated that our educational system is REQUIRED to produce “engaged...members of our community”? No school system can make their students be “engaged members of our society”. The responsibility of our education system is to teach academics that will help our students become **productive** members of our society. Our education system does not have any direct responsibility other than to educate our students and keep them safe. It is not the responsibility of our school system to make social justice warriors of our students!! It would behoove our school systems to produce well-educated students that can get well-paying jobs and that will be able to live productively on their own and take care of themselves by paying their bills. If we can do this, having citizens that contribute positively to society will take care of itself. This issue is definitely not resolved, because our school systems are producing and graduating the least educated students in our history!

Also, President Trump has cancelled DEI instruction in our schools in an Executive Order. This is just another attempt to continue DEI in our schools in direct opposition to President Trump’s Executive Order.

Please **VOTE NO** on this House Joint Resolution, and show our children that they do not need DEI in our schools to get a “complete” education. We can educate our children and “teach” them to treat everyone fairly, equally and with respect by holding them accountable to treating everyone that way.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals