

TESTIMONY to SUPPORT HB0875 Commission on History, Culture & Civics in Education

Establishing the Commission on History, Culture, and Civics in Education to make recommendations to the State Board of Education and the State Department of Education to further the discovery, interpretation, and learning of the history, culture, and civics of the United States and Maryland and provide equitable learning outcomes consistent with certain provisions of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future

TO: Chair Atterbeary and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Abbie Ellicott, I live in Anne Arundel County and I am writing to indicate my strong **SUPPORT for HB0875**.

I support this bill because as a mother and a psychologist, I know that our children need to learn about the diverse cultures and communities that are part of our past and present, including the experiences of marginalized people. As our world becomes more complicated and interconnected, things cannot be understood simply from one perspective.

Historically, our educational system has focused on the experience of those who hold power, specifically the perspective of white, wealthy and cis-gender men. The voices and history of others has been excluded. We need to ensure that our children learn about the diversity of humanity as this is the only way to adequately prepare them for the global world they inhabit.

I was educated in an excellent public school system in the 1970's, but I learned next to nothing about our country's history of racism, slavery, colonialism and imperialism. Information about African American, Pacific and Asian American, Latine and Indigenous cultures was not part of my education. LGBTQIA history was completely absent. The narrow focus of my education left me ignorant about the experience of marginalized peoples and cultures in the world, rendering me woefully unprepared for adulthood. My eyes were opened only after I traveled to other countries and developed connections with people from other backgrounds. This enabled me to begin to understand the history of BIPOC people from Latin America and the Caribbean and the history of colonialism and apartheid in African nations. I learned about the experiences of people from the Arab world and Southeast Asian countries. I learned so much more than anything I had had learned from my years of formal education.

Why should we teach about history, culture and civics? Because it benefits all of us and prepares our children to be thoughtful and productive global citizens. It promotes deeper understanding, empathy, and compassion. It helps dismantle stereotypes, thus creating a more just and equitable society. It enables our children to develop cultural competency. It validates students from marginalized backgrounds and instills a sense of belonging, worth and empowerment. Finally, it encourages our children to engage with their local communities, and equips them with the tools to make a difference in the broader world. Education is an invaluable and fundamental tool for inspiring our children to take action and become engaged members of democracy and society.

Clearly, this bill would lead to more equitable learning outcomes for all children. Currently, too many children do not have access to accurate history about the many groups in our country that have been marginalized, devalued and pathologized, including Black, Brown, Asian American and Indigenous communities, people with disabilities and LGBTQIA citizens. We need representation from all these groups in our educational curriculum or we are not giving our children a full, accurate picture of history. Historically, too often contributions of marginalized groups have been unheard and unseen. Too often these perspectives have been forgotten or intentionally suppressed. Too often the people in these communities have been pathologized and vilified. This harms all of us. It deprives us and our children from learning a full and truthful account of our past and present. It thus prevents them from becoming global citizens who are equipped to thrive in our complicated world.

I urge you to SUPPORT HB 0875.

Abbie M. Ellicott
682 Dill Ct
Severna Park MD 21146
Anne Arundel County, D31
2/20/2025