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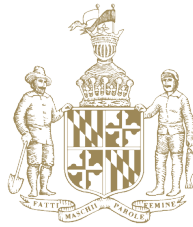
Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Election Law

Local Government/Bi-County
Agencies and Administration

Chair, Maryland Legislative
LGBTQ+ Caucus



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

HJ 3 - Elementary and Secondary Education - Curriculum - Importance of Diversity

The Honorable Anne Healey, Chair
House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Healey, Vice-Chair Holmes, and Esteemed Members of the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee:

School is where many students first learn the stories of our nation and our state. It is where they begin to understand the world and their place within it. Unfortunately, people and communities have been erased and ignored in our classrooms. I know firsthand the impact of being invisible in my curriculum, of growing up without seeing all of myself reflected in what is taught in our schools. I was left to navigate my identity as a gay man alone, that part of me missing from the lessons meant to educate and empower me. No student should have to experience that minimization.

That is why I urge you to support HJ 3, which affirms Maryland's commitment to a diverse and complete education—one that does not shy away from teaching the histories of people and communities that have faced discrimination and systemic exclusion. Not teaching these lessons gives our students an incomplete understanding of our history and overlooks the experiences of marginalized groups, including Black and Indigenous communities, immigrant communities, religious minorities, people with disabilities, women, and LGBTQIA+ people.

Erasure has real-world consequences for students' safety and our societal cohesion. When students do not see their histories represented in the classroom, they internalize the idea that their contributions do not matter. When we fail to teach about past injustices, we allow prejudice to persist unchecked. When students fail to understand the diversity in our state, they are not equipped with the social competency skills they need to be in our workforce.

All Maryland students deserve an education that is honest, complete, and reflective of the world they will inherit. We must teach the whole truth—that the fight for equality is woven into the fabric of our state's and nation's history. We must teach about the enslavement of Black Americans and the ongoing impacts of systemic racism. We must teach about the genocide and displacement of Indigenous peoples. We must teach about the struggles and triumphs of women, the labor rights movement, the disability rights movement, and the fight for LGBTQIA+ equality. We must teach about the experiences of Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and other religious minority communities who have faced persecution. Like so many

others, I had to seek out the truth of my history on my own. But our history should not be a scavenger hunt, especially if we ever want to learn from it and avoid the mistakes of the past. Teaching the whole truth should not be controversial.

An inclusive curriculum does more than just fill in historical gaps. It cultivates empathy, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of justice. It helps students recognize patterns of discrimination so they can break them. It empowers them with the knowledge to engage in civic life, to challenge misinformation, and to advocate for a more equitable society. We cannot ask our students to embrace the ideals of equality and justice if we do not first teach them about the struggles and triumphs of those who came before them. We cannot expect them to stand up against discrimination if they have never learned about the communities that have faced it.

With HJ 3, we send a clear message to every student in Maryland: You belong here. Your history matters. Your story deserves to be told, not as notes scrawled in the margins but as printed words on the pages of our books. Let us not fail another generation by withholding the truth. Let us instead equip them with the knowledge, empathy, and understanding they need to build a more just and equitable future.

I urge this committee to support HJ 3 because teaching the truth of our diversity is not just important—it is necessary. The future of Maryland depends on it. I respectfully request a favorable report.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kris Fair". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Delegate Kris Fair
District 3, Frederick County