

COALITION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

March 30, 2022

Education Finance Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Chair Davnie and Members of the Education Finance Committee,

On behalf of the Coalition for Children with Disabilities, we are writing to express support for provisions in House File 3401, Representative Richardson's Omnibus Education Policy bill. We thank the chair for the focus on non-exclusionary principles and policies. We support the following provisions in the Omnibus Policy Bill that provide:

- Additional teacher training for online teaching (Article 1 Section 4)
- Definitions and reporting on Pupil Withdrawal Agreements (Article 2 Section 2, 30, 37)
- Requirements for use of non-exclusionary practices before dismissal in discipline cases (Article 2, Section 29, 32)
- Ending suspensions and limiting expulsions for K-3 students (Article 2, Section 31)
- Suspension policies focused on inclusion and support for students including requiring educational supports for those who have been suspended 5 days, readmission supports, supports for students who have been bullied, prohibition for exclusionary practices for early learners, prohibiting exclusionary practices for attendance and truancy issues, and a complaint process for parents to dispute discipline decisions (Article 2 Sections 13, 27-41)
- A prohibition of teachers to withhold recess as form of punishment (Article 2, Section 13, 42)
- Additional restrictive procedure policies (Article 2, Section 61-63)
- Prep Time for Teachers for Due Process forms and procedures (Article 3, Section 16)

Coalition for Children with Disabilities

The Arc Minnesota • Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota
Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid/Minnesota Disability Law Center • Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance
PACER Center • Prader-Willi Syndrome Association of Minnesota
Proof Alliance

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OF COUNSEL	Mary E. Schofield, Esq. CA Tom Sanders, Esq. TX

Testimony for: Minnesota House Education Finance Committee

From: Amy R. Buchmeyer, HSLDA Staff Attorney

Date: March 30, 2022

Re: HF 3041

Dear Chair Davnie and Members of the Education Finance Committee,

By way of introduction, the Home School Legal Defense Association (HSLDA) is a national organization committed to protecting the fundamental constitutional right of parents to direct the education and upbringing of their children. With over 106,000 member families, including over 2,000 in Minnesota, we are the world's largest homeschool advocacy organization.

On behalf of those families, HSLDA opposes the addition of “ethnic studies” as a required subject listed under Sec.120A.22, subdivision 9, MN Statutes, found on line 23.5 of HF 3401.

Minnesota's compulsory school attendance law states that parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that a child acquires the knowledge and skills essential for effective citizenship. If this is true normally, it is doubly so when a parent exercises their constitutional right to educate their child at home.

Homeschooling parents have a right and a duty to provide the best education for their children. Adding additional course requirements unnecessarily burdens the exercise of that right. Many parents choose homeschooling because it provides the flexibility to tailor a curriculum to meet their child's individual needs. Additional course requirements create further hurdles for parents, limiting their ability to adjust to their student's unique interests. Failure to comply with this new requirement would be a violation of the compulsory attendance law. Homeschools do not look like public or private schools—nor should they. Forced standardization and conformity stifles the very flexibility from which homeschooled children benefit.

When educating their own child, a parent agrees to meet the basic requirements listed in the compulsory school attendance statute, including four broad subject areas: basic communication skills including reading and writing, literature, and fine arts; mathematics and science; social studies including history, geography, economics, government, and citizenship; and health and physical education.

“Ethnic studies” is out of place as a fifth category on this list. It is not as broad as the other subject areas and more accurately fits under the social studies category. There are other, more appropriate places in the statute to list ethnic studies as a requirement, and they are already listed in this bill under the provisions for public school students.

The addition of another required subject to Sec. 120A.22 undermines the purpose of the statute and prevents parents who have taken responsibility for their children's education from fully exercising their authority to educate their children in effective citizenship as they see fit.

Therefore, we ask you to remove line 23.5.

March 31, 2022 HF3401

To: Members of the House Education Finance Committee

From: Robert S. Prigge, MACHE Executive Director

Minnesota Association of Christian Home Educators - MACHE

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony on HF3401. I am writing on behalf of the Minnesota Association of Christian Homeschool Educators in opposition to the new state curricula mandate included in HF3401, “line 23.5”. Specifically, MACHE is concerned that the additional requirement of “ethnic studies” is unclear, and intrusive.

This requirement for distinct focus on ethnic studies is not needed. Part of the expectations for social studies education already includes the study of all people groups that are representative of those that have built both Minnesota and the collective United States. This has long been part of our social studies curriculum, and segregating it apart from a comprehensive and cohesive social studies curriculum is inappropriate. It would also seem to focus this topical area on par with mathematics, science and communication competencies, which is again concerning and highly subjective.

The requirement is unclear. The legislation requires instruction to be provided in ethnic studies, but doesn’t define the term, a clearly communicated intent and the learning objective of this focus, how to measure outcomes in an effective and healthy manner for students of this instruction. The lack of clarity in the focus and objective would be very problematic as a required course of instruction and frankly is likely duplicative of the social studies focus currently in place.

The requirement is intrusive. The basic, inalienable, right of parents to raise and educate their children is conducted in cooperation with the state within the boundaries of indigenous (or natural) law. Where the state could add numerous areas of particular study, for each political wave that blows, they also need to be done within the consent of the governed. (For instance, we could easily add “computer programming” as an “essential” area of study to thrive in the modern world, express ourselves, and to be independent.) Each area of focus requires time and necessarily removes time from other areas of study. Requirements are not to be added lightly or done where they are not commonly agreed on. Where some subjects have different levels of importance to different people, they will make curricular choices for the good of the child. This autonomy is not necessarily a denigration of a topic, but a right to customize learning. We regard tolerance for difference as a primary value in education.

The purpose and point of a general outline of instructional expectations is to sustain a *common* understanding of the current law pointing to the absolute basics of communication (reading and writing), mathematics and science, and social studies for and towards the core elements needed for basic citizenship. Where these subjects have heightened value that is commonly agreed upon, picking a particular narrow topic and elevating it is driven by political preference and subjective opinion, not common law.

I encourage you to remove the addition of “ethnic studies” as a required subject from HF3401.