

Dear Chair Davnie and members of the committee,

My name is Sarah Goodspeed and I am a nonprofit education professional. I am writing to you today to speak in favor of the Ethnic Studies Bill (HF3434). As an educator and community member I believe that it is important for us to have Ethnic Studies in our schools as I work with hundreds of diverse students from across the state every year, many of whom completing their K-12 education in Minnesota schools without ever seeing their own histories or communities reflected in our curriculum. Year after year I navigate basic questions with students hungry to understand our world and their place in it that busy or uncomfortable educators often avoid. White, black, brown, Indigenous and immigrant, rich or poor students coming from different schools and communities have vastly different perspectives that an ethnic studies curriculum can help provide consistent knowledge that will bridge the vast divides we see across our communities and to understand and value our differences in a time with increasingly dangerous racism and increasing divisions. Even the members in this Legislative body frequently lament that we do not see eye to eye, this is your chance to help the next generation do better.

Ethnic Studies courses are proven to support students' learning and engagement to address Minnesota's worst-in-the-nation graduation disparities. A study sponsored by Stanford University in 2016, three San Francisco high schools were studied over five years. 9th-grade students who were at risk of dropping out had a 21 percent increase in attendance if they took an Ethnic Studies course. They also increased their grade point average, or GPA, by 1.4 points. (Dee, Thomas and Emily Peener. 2016.) In my work supporting classroom educators, I see firsthand how providing educators with structure and tools to teach challenging subjects empowers them to give students the education and answers they are looking for. Students, teachers, and communities want ethnic studies in our schools. Let's give them the tools they need to be successful and to make Minnesota stronger.

I truly believe that as a state we can be leaders in this work and ensure that we do right by all our students, educators, and community members. Our students deserve a true and honest education, one that honors their brilliance and diversity. Again, I urge the committee to support this bill and invest in our future. Thank you so much for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Goodspeed  
Minneapolis, MN

---

Dear chair Davnie and members of the committee,

My name is Benjamin Anderson. I am writing to you today to speak in favor of the Ethnic Studies Bill (HF3434). I believe that it is important for us to have Ethnic Studies in our schools because it's important to teach students about the ethnic heritage and history of the many peoples that make up our country and world, not just the narrow points of view and stories that are too often the only ones told to the exclusion of others.

I truly believe that as a state we can be leaders in this work and ensure that we do right by all our students, educators, and community members. Our students deserve a true and honest education, one that honors their brilliance and diversity. Again, I urge the committee to support this bill and invest in our future. Thank you so much for your time and consideration on this matter.

---

March 8th, 2022

Representative Jim Davnie  
Education Finance, Chair  
443 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Support for HF 3434

Dear chair Davnie and members of the committee,

*My name is Lisa Fralish and I am an elementary educator, as well as a constituent of chair Davnie, residing at 3904 Bloomington Ave in Minneapolis. I am writing to you today to speak in favor of the Ethnic Studies Bill (HF3434). As an educator, I believe that it is important for us to have Ethnic Studies in our schools because students are more engaged when they are reflected in their school curriculum. During class discussions about how to improve our school, my fourth graders have asked for more time to tell stories and learn from each other, as well as more books in their home languages. These are just two examples of how ethnic studies could be implemented at the elementary school level in order to make all our students feel more welcome and build their empathy. Now more than ever, we need ethnic studies in our schools to address social and emotional needs, develop critical thinking skills, and promote understanding of various points of view.*

*I would like to further add that Ethnic Studies courses have proven to support a students' learning and engagement. A study sponsored by Stanford University in 2016, three San Francisco high schools were studied over five years. 9th-grade students who were at risk of dropping out had a 21 percent increase in attendance if they took an Ethnic Studies course. They also increased their grade point average, or GPA, by 1.4 points. ([Dee, Thomas and Emily Peener. 2016.](#))*

*I truly believe that as a state we can be leaders in this work and ensure that we do right by all our students, educators, and community members. Our students deserve a true and honest education, one that honors their brilliance and diversity. Again, I urge the committee to support this bill and invest in our future. Thank you so much for your time and consideration on this matter.*

Sincerely,  
Lisa Fralish



March 7, 2022

Representative Jim Davnie  
Chair, Education Finance Committee  
443 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St Paul, MN 55155

Re: House File 3434

Chair Davnie and Members of the Committee,

Education Evolving is a non-partisan education organization that works to advance student-centered learning for all Minnesota students. We are writing to express our support for the HF3434 to make ethnic studies a graduation requirement.

The body of research on ethnic studies affirms what educators and students have long known: Ethnic studies improve educational outcomes. Students who participate in ethnic studies not only have higher rates of student academic engagement, but also higher graduation rates.

Participation in ethnic studies strengthens students' racial and ethnic identity development and attitudes toward learning. Ethnic Studies enables all students to better understand the rich heritage, culture, and history of the land upon which we live, told from multiple and diverse perspectives.<sup>1</sup> It helps foster cross-cultural understanding among both students of color and white students and aids students in valuing their own cultural identity while appreciating the differences around them.<sup>2</sup> It also encourages educators, schools, and school districts to value the cultural capital in their local community.<sup>3</sup>

In Minnesota, two of the largest district school districts are leading the charge to include ethnic studies in schools. Minneapolis Public Schools and St. Paul Public Schools both have made ethnic studies a graduation requirement. At the national level, Washington, Nevada, and Nebraska are working to adapt their academic standards and/or curriculums to include ethnic studies. Connecticut<sup>4</sup> and Indiana have passed legislation requiring all

---

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Sleeter, C. E., & Zavala, M. (2021). What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies. *Transforming Multicultural Education Policy and Practice: Expanding Educational Opportunity*, 209

<sup>3</sup> Schmidt, P. R. (2005). Culturally Responsive Instruction: Promoting Literacy in Secondary Content Areas. *Learning Point Associates/North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL)*.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cga.ct.gov/2019/ACT/pa/pdf/2019PA-00012-R00HB-07082-PA.pdf>

public high schools offer an elective Ethnic Studies course.<sup>5</sup> Oregon<sup>6</sup>, Texas<sup>7</sup>, and Vermont<sup>8</sup> are updating their K-12 standards with ethnic studies standards or to be more inclusive of the histories related to racial and ethnic groups.

Minnesota currently has one of the largest opportunity gaps between students of color<sup>9</sup> and white students, including high school graduation rates<sup>10</sup>, testing scores, and more. We must stop gawking at our problem, especially when the data show us a clear and direct opportunity to make a meaningful impact and improve the academic experience of all Minnesota students. I urge the committee to join the vanguard of other schools, districts, and states, and vote in support of this bill.

Thank you, Reps. Frazier, Lee, Agbaje, Xiong, Her, Gomez, Boldon, Lippert, Jordan, Berg, Hassan, Feist, Wazlawik, Keeler, Davnie, and Youakim for your leadership and support on this bill, and your efforts toward creating policy that would benefit all students.

Sincerely,



Danyika Leonard  
Policy Director at Education Evolving  
332 Minnesota Street, Suite W1360  
Saint Paul, MN 55101  
[danyika@educationevolving.org](mailto:danyika@educationevolving.org)

---

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/educ/Racial-Justice\\_v02.pdf](https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/educ/Racial-Justice_v02.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/socialsciences/Documents/Ethnic%20Studies%20one-pager.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://tea.texas.gov/academics/subject-areas/social-studies>

<sup>8</sup> <https://nhcsl.org/resources/resolutions/2019/2019-13/>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.minneapolisfed.org/~media/assets/pages/education-achievement-gaps/achievement-gaps-mn-report.pdf?la=en](https://www.minneapolisfed.org/~/media/assets/pages/education-achievement-gaps/achievement-gaps-mn-report.pdf?la=en)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ciresiwalburnfoundation.org/newsreports/2019/4/2/minnesota-schools-are-worst-in-the-nation-for-our-children-of-color#:~:text=Federal%20data%20released%20in%20January,50th%20among%20the%2050%20states>



**Saint Paul**  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**Independent School District 625**  
360 Colborne Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55102-3299

**Office of the Superintendent**  
Joseph Gothard, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

Telephone: (651) 767-8152 Fax: (651) 767-3441 www.spps.org

DATE: March 4, 2022

To: House Education Finance Committee Members

From: Joe Gothard, Superintendent

RE: HF3434

On behalf of the St. Paul Public School Board of Education, I am writing to voice our support for HF3434. I'm proud to report that the St. Paul School Board adopted a policy in December to require that Ethnic Studies become a basic course requirement for Saint Paul's high school diploma starting with the graduating class of 2025. In addition, all 10th graders will be scheduled to take Ethnic Studies in school year 2022-2023. This was a culmination of work led by our student leaders, who engaged their fellow students and community at numerous meetings and forums, after reviewing the research and pedagogy to advocate for this policy change. The course was also piloted in three high schools, where 93 percent of students who participated in the pilot recommended the course.

The high school requirement is an interdisciplinary course that examines students' identity, heritage, culture, and communities in relation to various power structures, forms of oppression and inequalities that have an impact on their lives. With an emphasis on stories and lived experiences of people of color in the United States, the course explores the collective struggles, resilience, and triumphs of their communities.

In addition, St. Paul is in the process of reviewing and updating our curriculum K-8. We have established an Ethnic Studies Community Collaborative Group, who will meet quarterly to collaborate on the Ethnic Studies course curriculum and programmatic activities. This is a direct partnership with SPPS so that the course will be reflective of the needs and wants of the community we serve.

The district has also identified the following long-term goals:

- Continue to support student recruitment and enrollment district wide through data-driven results
- Increase programing staffing at relevant school sites and district level
- Collaborate with other districts programs to disrupt systems of inequity and institutional racism to support student learning and development, and provide all students with support and opportunity to succeed
- Establish partnerships with outside research organization for thorough program and course evaluation
- Establish partnerships with Colleges/Universities on CIS/Concurrent Enrollment for CES Course
- Continue to development and offer new elective courses for Ethnic Studies Department
- Embedded Ethnic Studies Teaching and Pedagogy across at all SPPS grade levels and content area.
- Expand CES course offerings to middle school sites
- Work towards an Educational Pathway to "Grow Our Own Educators" in Ethnic Studies with accredited Colleges/Universities.
- Continue to collect data in all aspects of the program to inform improvements and to support our district mission to inspire students to think critically, pursue their dreams and change the world.

We are excited about advancing this work with our students, educators and community.



MARCH 8TH, 2022

REPRESENTATIVE JIM DAVNIE  
EDUCATION FINANCE, CHAIR  
443 STATE OFFICE BUILDING  
ST. PAUL, MN 55155

RE: SUPPORT FOR HF 3434

My name is Daisy Hernandez-Barguiarena I am a youth coordinator and community organizer. I write to you to voice my support in favor of the Ethnic Studies bill (HF3434). As a person who has seen the work young people are doing to implement Ethnic Studies in our state, it's important to recognize the value of their insight.

Since 2020, I have become more invested in learning about Ethnic Studies and in college was a part of the Youth 4 Ethnic Studies Coalition. This coalition is made up of young people all throughout Minnesota who have studied what Ethnic Studies really are and decided that this is what we need to have the best Minnesotan education. As detailed in the bill, "Ethnic studies means the critical and interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity with a focus on the experiences and perspectives of people of color within and beyond the United States." In other words, Ethnic Studies seek to uplift the history of all people in our nation and beyond regardless of their race or ethnicity. Our young people want to learn about Latinx history, African American history, Asian American history, and Indigenous/First Nation history in a way that is thorough and truthful. In addition, a 2016 study by Standford University showed that Ethnic Studies support a students' learning and engagement. (Dee, Thomas, and Emily Peener. 2016.)

For too long Minnesota has been a state with enormous educational disparities for our low-income and BIPOC students.(Grunewald, Rob, and Nath, Anusha. 2019.) I truly believe passing HF 3434 is one step towards giving all Minnesotan youth the education they deserve. Let's invest in the youth people in our state. I urge the committee to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Daisy Hernandez-Barguiarena

Thursday, March 3, 2022

**Dear Chair of the House Education Finance Committee:**

I am writing today as an engaged community member and elementary school teacher in Duluth, Minnesota. I submit this testimony in support of HF3434.

As an educator in the state, it is my goal to ensure that my students are adequately prepared for the world they are going to live in. This is no small task and involves many educators, parents/guardians, and administrators working together to bring a multi-faceted education to our students in Minnesota. I am grateful for the proposed HF3434 because I believe this will be one more essential piece of the puzzle in the education of our students.

When our students learn about different races and ethnicities, different perspectives and beliefs, their own perspectives can broaden and they can more easily see the layers of depth and perspective that exist amongst peers. Later these skills can transfer to working more collaboratively with colleagues, neighbors, and friends. While it is difficult to predict what kinds of knowledge our students will need in ten, twenty, or thirty years from now, what we do know is that they will always need the skills that enable them to be able to work with people who hold different perspectives and experiences. Including ethnic studies in the curriculum will allow our students to learn about the traditionally less-shared perspectives of people of color, making the curriculum more inclusive and inviting to all students, particularly our students of color who often do not see themselves as part of the curriculum. This is imperative for the success of all students.

Therefore, for the children who are our future, I urge the committee to support HF3434.

Sincerely,

Elaine Schmid