

February 28, 2022 / HF3401:

To: Members of the House Education Policy 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 House File 3401. 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 28.26”. 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.