

Good afternoon Chair Pryor and members of the Education Policy Committee. My name is Jenny Zanner Rowe. I'm a social studies Teacher at Rosemount High school in ISD 196, one of the largest districts in this state. I'm testifying today against HF 358 on behalf of the sixteen people in my department. I'm grateful for the opportunity to testify remotely—as you can probably see, I'm still at school.

Although my colleagues and I fully support a general civics or government credit bearing requirement in high school, this bill contains language that will drop a bomb on many school districts across the state.

If the legislature mandates that civics or government is taught only in 10th-12th grade, any district that doesn't already do this will need to completely—and quickly—overhaul the sequence of their course offerings for all four years of high school. I'm telling you as a teacher that this will be highly disruptive to the entire high school program, especially for students.

Social Studies curricula, like any other curricula, are carefully customized to grade level in relationship to all of a school's course offerings, often across disciplines!

In my district, my students learn US History, World History (both with Geography standards embedded) and Economics after they learn about their own government. This enables them to understand the framework of a government and use that understanding while they engage with history and improve their skills in writing and analysis. For example, imagine trying to understand events in US History without understanding the separation of powers—pretty difficult!

Please don't assume we forget about civics and government in our district just because we teach it early in high school—in fact, I would argue that 11th or 12th grade is awfully late to teach these to our modern students. They're politically aware and need it much earlier than that which is why we teach it in 9th grade! It's a real mystery to me why Rep. Urdahl wishes to forbid the teaching of this essential material in 9th grade but will permit it one year later.

Our department has spent years carefully developing the sequence of our Social Studies offerings in our district with input from our families and our community. This bill is offensive to the idea of local control over schools. No other part of this bill mandates that any course must be taught in any particular year of high school.

I recognize that Rep. Urdahl was a Social Studies teacher and I respect his experience. However, a lot has changed in the best practices of teaching Social Studies in the last 30 years. I know this because that's how long I've been in the classroom. In four districts. And I'm still here.

Please, don't intervene unnecessarily in local district decisions. Thank you for considering my comments.