

February 28, 2023

Chair Laurie Pryor
House Education Policy—120 Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Chair Pryor and members of the House Education Policy Committee:

The Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans (the Council) submits this letter in support of H.F. 1502, offered by Representative S. Sencer-Mura, to establish a requirement for state social studies standards to include ethnic studies.

The Council is charged by the Legislature with the statutory duty of advocating on behalf of Minnesota's Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities, acting as the liaison between state government and Minnesota's API communities, and serving as an advisory body to the Legislature and the Governor. It is in this capacity that we strongly urge the passage of H.F. 1502.

As one of the state's three ethnic councils, the Council is privileged to be active within our immigrant and refugee communities. In Minnesota alone, there are over 60 distinct communities of Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic or national origin. These communities have grown from approximately 40,000 individuals in 1985, or about one percent of Minnesota's population according to estimates by MDH, to over 367,000 today, or about 6.5 percent of the state's total population. The United States, and Minnesota, are undeniably richer and more vibrant for the contributions of these new Minnesotans, but the state has been slow to recognize and adapt to the changing makeup of our communities.

This bill offers a concrete way to acknowledge and celebrate the breadth, depth, and diversity of Minnesotans today while supporting academic success. As communities such as ours grow and form an increasingly integral component of our society, it is appropriate for schools to adapt their social studies curriculum to reflect current society. Not only will this bring school curriculums into alignment with the reality of communities, but students will become more fully engaged in their academic work as they see themselves in the history of their state and nation. In this way, this bill will accomplish both an academic and civic purpose in the education of our students.

We thank the Committee for its consideration of this bill and urge its adoption to strengthen the academic future of students and reflect the vibrant diversity of our state today and into the future.

Sincerely,



Andrew Morris
Legislative and Public Affairs Liaison
Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans



February 28, 2023

Re: Support for HF1502, Ethnic Studies Requirement Created

Dear Chair Pryor and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

One of Minnesota's greatest assets is our state's rich diversity. And yet, we struggle with persistent opportunity gaps that impact educational outcomes for students from historically underserved communities. It is clear we need to do far more to bolster preK-12 resources and access, while also addressing inclusion to ensure our students of color and Indigenous students feel seen and celebrated in Minnesota schools.

HF1502 is an important step toward this, ensuring a well-rounded approach to social studies that includes and reflects the diverse experiences of our students. It will ensure that all students receive a holistic education that builds deeper cross-cultural understanding and creates a more accurate picture of our state and nation's social and historical context—a key step to closing the opportunity gap. HF1502 contains a few key elements that will support successful implementation of the policy:

- Expanding social studies standards: The bill weaves ethnic studies into the framework for state social studies requirements, ensuring all students build an understanding of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity that will equip them to succeed in a diversifying nation.
- Intentional engagement with community: The bill ensures that the process for rolling out ethnic studies includes opportunities for student, parent, and community engagement and feedback. By requiring school needs assessments and a statewide working group, the bill establishes strong processes to support effective implementation.
- Ongoing support systems: The bill also includes supports for schools and districts, including model curriculum support, staffing at the Minnesota Department of Education, and coursework development grants. These elements will help the initiative launch successfully.

By expanding ethnic studies, HF1502 will ensure students of color see themselves reflected in their curriculum, supporting their educational success while also expanding understanding among all students of the diverse cultural and historical backgrounds represented in our state. This bill is a critical step in closing educational opportunity gaps and ensuring student success and we thank Rep. Sencer-Mura for her leadership on this bill.

Sincerely,
Matt Shaver
Policy Director



February 27, 2023

TO: Representative Laurie Pryor, Committee Chair, and members of the House Education Policy Committee
FROM: Danyika Leonard, on behalf of Education Evolving
RE: House File 1502

Chair Pryor 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 HF1502 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 academic engagement, **they also have higher graduation rates.**

Participation in ethnic studies strengthens students' racial and ethnic identity development and attitudes toward learning. Ethnic studies:

- Enable all students to better understand the rich heritages, cultures, and histories of the land upon which we live, told from multiple and diverse perspectives.¹
- Foster cross-cultural understanding among both students of color and white students, aiding them in valuing their own cultural identity while appreciating the differences around them² and closing opportunity gaps.
- Encourage educators, schools, and districts to value the cultural capital in their local communities.³

This is not a new idea: Minneapolis Public Schools and St. Paul Public Schools have made ethnic studies a graduation requirement. Nebraska, Nevada, and Washington are adapting their academic standards and curriculums to include ethnic studies. Connecticut⁴ and Indiana require all public high schools offer an elective ethnic studies course.⁵ Oregon⁶, Texas⁷, and Vermont⁸ are updating their K-12 standards with ethnic studies standards and to be more inclusive of the histories related to racial and ethnic groups.

¹ Sleeter, C. E., & Zavala, M. (2021). What the Research Says About Ethnic Studies. *Transforming Multicultural Education Policy and Practice: Expanding Educational Opportunity*, 209.

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

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

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

⁵ https://www.ncsl.org/Portals/1/Documents/educ/Racial-Justice_v02.pdf

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

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

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

Our state will thrive with generations of scholars prepared to compete, grow, and innovate locally, nationally, and globally because of our commitment to ethnic studies. We urge this committee to join the vanguard of other schools, districts, and states, and vote in support of HF 1502.

Thank you Representative Sencer-Mura and the thirty-four co-authoring House representatives for your leadership and support on this bill, and your efforts toward creating policy that will benefit all students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danyika Leonard". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Danyika" being more prominent than the last name "Leonard".

Danyika Leonard, MPA, LSW
Policy Director, Education Evolving
danyika@educationevolving.org

2/26/2023

To the Education Committee,

I am a parent of four children in the state of Minnesota. I am invested in the education of children in this state as a teacher, volunteer with children and a degree in youth studies which has given me the opportunity to work with youth of all ages.

I am addressing the House bill HF 1502/ SF 1476. I oppose the entirety of this bill. If this bill was simply requesting school districts to have Ethnic Studies as a high school elective class, then there may be some redeemable aspects of this bill that could be considered as long as there was a change in the definition of Ethnic Studies.

My first opposition to this bill is found in lines 1.9, 1.14, 4.16 - 4.19, 4.31- 5.1, 5.4-5.6, and lines 5.11-5.13 which states that Ethnic Studies would be a required academic standard for students to graduate, these lines state that very valuable academic learning and academic credits in science, language arts and social studies would be replaced by ethnic studies. Currently as of 2022 less than half of ALL students are meeting state standards in Minnesota in reading, science and math. According to the State of Minnesota's report card from 2022 out of all students in the state only 44.8% are meeting the State's standards in Math, 51.1% in reading and 41.3% in science. Yet, legislators want to impose not just ethnic studies on children (also HF 1269), but also bill HF 174 comprehensive sex education, bill HF 1269 Native American studies, bill SF 476 climate justice and of course Social Emotional Learning which is also taking over the education in our schools.

I would like to ask the legislators how will these new bills imposing these 5 new core learning standards on children K-12, improve the reading, science and math scores of our children? When will children find time to learn about the excellence of reading, writing, math and science? How is taking more time away from our students learning the core basics going to help them? How will students be able to get real jobs in the real world without reading, writing, math and science basic skills?

It should be the school districts that determine their goals with the input of their community, not the state! This is taking away local power and giving it to the state. By having the state mandate that a non-academic requirement of Ethnic studies needs to be embedded into not only district goals but also as a graduation requirement and a new

academic standard for all grades K-12, an undue burden is placed on schools, hindering the need teacher's have to focus on the excellence of reading, writing, math, and science.

I oppose lines 5.14-5.25 where schools are required to provide a school needs assessment. First, this again adds an undue burden to the administration of schools and school districts especially small charter schools who do not have the extra financial resources to be adding extra, labor intensive, administrative work when you combine all the bills currently being proposed to mandate multiple new core curriculums in schools.

Second, it is also not feasible to require school districts and small charter schools to be taking time to do this annually.

Third, the only redeemable component about this section of this bill is the question, would this provide schools the choice not to participate in ethnic studies if their school community deems it unnecessary and unwanted? Parents and the local community should always have the final say in what is taught to their children and in their schools, not the state. Therefore, if the school needs assessment, determines that the community would rather have their children excel in reading, writing, math and science then this assessment should allow districts and especially charter schools to opt out of this ethnic studies requirement.

I would like to remind the legislators that charter schools have started for the very purpose of trying something new in education, something different from the general public education schools. This bill significantly violates charter schools and their purpose to do something new and imposes on their mission and vision which gives existence to those charter schools. Therefore, I would suggest that charter schools be removed from this bill to allow them the autonomy they have been given and deserve to remain true to the state in the individual mission and vision of each charter school for which they were created.

I also very strongly oppose the definition of Ethnic studies in lines 4.21 - 4.27 and 6.26 - 6.27. According to the definition of Ethnic Studies in Section 4, it would require students to learn the framework of cultural marxism teaching students to focus on power groups, to separate themselves and view each other through the lens of oppressed or oppressor. This bill of Ethnic studies has nothing to do with learning about different cultures; rather it's a belief that continues to resurface throughout history only this time instead of focusing on classes as Marxism did, this definition of ethnic studies redefines Marxism to

focus on skin color and race, an immutable characteristic. The definition of ethnic studies in this bill would make today's Cultural Marxist ideology the ruling ideology taught to every child in the public schools in the state of Minnesota. This definition which focuses on race in connection to other "groups" teaches kids to segregate, causes division rather than unity and encourages children to play a part in identity politics by thinking of different groups of children as bad and other groups of children as good based on their ethnicity or skin color. This employs power dynamics among young children in the state of Minnesota.

It should not be the goal of the state or school district to require people to validate, affirm and embrace ideologies that may go against their personal convictions, religion or an idea that seeks to control the thoughts, actions and emotions of the citizens in which it is supposed to be serving. This breaks the first amendment rights that protects individual citizens of America from a government mandated belief system.

Finally, I oppose line 6.30 as this discriminates against European Americans and their ethnicities are not included rather they have been excluded.

Due to these reasons and the content outlined in ethnic studies, I ask that you oppose this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Natalie Kasper
Resident of Dakota County, Minnesota



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: February 27, 2023

To: House Education Committee Members

From: Joe Gothard, Superintendent
RE: HF1502

On behalf of the St. Paul Public School Board of Education, I am writing to voice our support for HF1502. I'm proud to report that the St. Paul School Board adopted a policy in December 2021 to require that Ethnic Studies become a basic course requirement for Saint Paul's high school diploma starting with the graduating class of 2025. Currently, all 10th graders are taking Ethnic Studies this academic school year. 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.

During our initial implementation, 93 percent of students who participated 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.

We have established an Ethnic Studies Advisory & Community Collaborative Group, which meets regularly 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 for Ethnic Studies:

- 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
- Continue 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 accreditedColleges/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.

As one of the few school districts to have an Ethnic Studies graduation course requirement, we couldn't have done this work without our young people. The success of our program could be a model for other school districts to replicate in the on-going struggle to ensure all Minnesota students can excel, have access to equitable opportunities and improve educational outcomes.

We are excited about advancing this work with our students, educators and community. Please consider supporting HF1502.

Thank you!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Gothard". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Dr. Joe Gothard, Superintendent
Saint Paul Public Schools



8421 Wayzata Blvd | Suite 110 | Golden Valley, MN 55426

February 27, 2023

Dear Members of the House Education Policy Committee:

My name is Catrin Wigfall, and I am a policy fellow at Center of the American Experiment. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HF 1502.

As currently written, this bill requires ethnic studies be added to social studies standards, be a high school graduation requirement, and be provided through instruction in elementary and middle schools. It would require many new mandates on school districts, including administering school surveys and hiring ethnic studies staff, along with encroaching on local control by requiring a model curriculum that the Department of Education must support school districts and charter schools in using.

The state should not require a highly politicized course

I am writing today on behalf of American Experiment in objection to HF 1502 as currently written, as this bill will require a highly politicized course to be embedded into K-12 education and will add many burdensome mandates on school districts.

To be clear, American Experiment's stance is not against an ethnic studies class in the traditional sense of emphasizing ethnic and cultural understanding. Studying cultures, their histories, and artistic, literary, economic and social achievements is important for students.

Unfortunately, based on the definition of ethnic studies in HF 1502, this is not what will be emphasized in Minnesota classrooms, with instead the focus being on a class-and-race warfare model, founded on highly politicized themes of systems of power and oppression, white supremacy, patriarchy, colonialism, and implicit bias, to name a few.

The state should not micromanage curriculum

Minnesota is a local-control state, with local school boards tasked with selecting the textbooks and curricula to be used. Under HF 1502, this local control would be infringed upon, as school districts and charter schools would have to use a model curriculum developed by a Department of Education working group.

Students can, should, and do learn about the significant contributions varied groups of Americans have made to society. Students can learn about the cultures and histories of the multitude of ethnic groups who have contributed to shaping America. Students should have the opportunity to see their history, heritage, and culture in their education. HF 1502 would politicize this opportunity by requiring an ethnic studies course rooted in ideological tenets.

This committee should be focused on improving students' academic outcomes and preparing them to be informed Minnesotans who can meaningfully contribute to society. Instead, under HF 1502, this ethnic studies course starts students down the path to political activism.

Sincerely,

/Catrin Wigfall/

Policy Fellow
Center of the American Experiment



February 27, 2023

Education Policy Committee
Minnesota House of Representatives
Minnesota Legislature

Sent via email

Dear members of the Education Policy Committee:

We are the Twin Cities Chapter of the Foundation Against Intolerance & Racism (FAIR), a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing civil rights and liberties for all Americans and promoting a common culture based on fairness, understanding, and humanity. Our website, fairforall.org, can give you a fuller sense of our mission and activities. Thank you for your careful consideration of our thoughts regarding *HF 1502 (Rep. Sencer-Mura) Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement*.

We at FAIR believe that our future depends to a significant degree on our ability to teach our children those nonpartisan habits and values necessary to the proper functioning of a liberal democracy such as ours. This includes a fact-based, balanced, and honest account of our nation's history—both its revolutionary founding promise of freedom and equality, as well as the times we have failed to keep that promise. As we experience declining confidence in our institutions, as we observe illiberal ideas and practices gaining momentum, it is more important than ever to teach the next generation of Minnesotans why America's founding ideals were so essential to the progress we have made, and are so essential to the progress we must still make.

We are very concerned by Minnesota's sudden push for standards and curricula—particularly in the fields of ethnic and social studies—that present only a single, partisan view of American history as well as of various contemporary issues. In its current form, HF 1502 would have Minnesota schools teach a version of ethnic studies that is overtly political in nature; this should concern Minnesotans of all backgrounds and political beliefs. Minnesota is not the first state to be faced with this dilemma. Across the country, many legislatures, departments of education,

school leaders and educators have already decided on the kind of ethnic studies that will be taught in their schools. Here in Minnesota, we still have a choice: should our brand of ethnic studies be inclusive and nonpartisan, or non-inclusive and partisan? The latter, often referred to as “liberated” ethnic studies, is clearly favored by activist groups such as EdLib Minnesota.

The vast majority of Minnesota parents favor an inclusive, non-partisan approach to ethnic studies. This type of education broadens students’ understanding of American history and the important contributions that have been made by people of all ethnic backgrounds. It highlights ethnic groups’ positive impact on the broader society and teaches respect for individuals who, despite discrimination, have led exemplary lives. Inclusive ethnic studies avoids a zero-sum mindset in which gains for one group mean losses for another and rejects the noxious idea that society’s main currency is power and privilege. It also properly rejects the notion that “group identity” should be the primary lens through which history, society, culture, and politics are to be understood. Most significantly, it advances the positive, constructive view that an individual’s personal characteristics — such as character, personality, interests, and talents — contribute substantially to their future purpose and success¹.

In contrast, “liberated” ethnic studies is the product of an activist political movement that is heavily focused on race consciousness and identity politics. This movement appears to be intent on alienating the youth from our institutions and on emphasizing victimization rather than agency. Proponents of liberated ethnic studies dismiss racial progress as a mirage and instead seek to heighten our citizens’ awareness of immutable differences such as race, ethnicity, and gender. This illiberal theory seeks to delegitimize ideas that rest at the core of our American identity: individual merit, tolerance, the rule of law, compromise through reasoned discussion, etc. Despite the fact that these values prevent both anarchy and tyranny, “liberationists” undermine these ideals by claiming that they exist only to maintain various kinds of “unearned privilege”. Worse, these same people actively seek to turn our children into activists who, they hope, will radically transform their schools, their communities, and their nation².

HF1502 defines “Ethnic Studies” as follows:

“... 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. Ethnic studies analyzes the ways in which race and racism have been and continue to be powerful social, cultural, and political forces, and the connection of race to other groups of stratification, including gender, class, sexuality, religion, and legal status.”³

¹ Honig, B (2022). Schools Should Opt for Inclusive Ethnic Studies. Edsource.org.

² Ibid.

³ A bill for an act creating an ethnic studies requirement, Minnesota Statutes 2022, section 120B.025, Subd. 1.

The proposed model curriculum framework, focused on power dynamics and intersectionality, is replete with the “liberated” version of ethnic studies. For example:

- “(a) The model curriculum must:
- (2) include a **power, race, class, and gender analysis** as part of the course via literature, discussion, classwork, and homework as the analysis relates to ethnic studies courses; and
 - (3) include an **intersectional analysis** of climate, health, food, housing, education, and policy.
- (b) The model ethnic studies curriculum must include the following topics:
- (1) Latinx studies;
 - (2) African American studies;
 - (3) Asian American studies;
 - (4) Indigenous or First Nation studies; or
 - (5) introduction to ethnic studies.”⁴

FAIR Twin Cities strongly encourages the Education Policy Committee and the Minnesota State Legislature to take a pause. We ask you to carefully assess whether, considering the burden of current graduation requirements as well as the strain that a new course mandate would place on many schools, HF1502 is even necessary. In any case, do not rush into adopting HF1502 and an ethnic studies graduation requirement for Minnesota’s school children. Finally, if ethnic studies must be taught in Minnesota, it should be inclusive and nonpartisan, rather than the “liberated” and politicized version.

Sincerely,



Jeff Campbell
Chapter Leader
FAIR Twin Cities

⁴ Ibid, Subd. 6(a)-(b)

Dear House Education Policy Committee,

My name is Karin Miller. I am a wife, mother and educator from Dakota County. I am writing in opposition to HF 1502 / SF 1476, which seeks to add an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement, because it is divisive, discriminatory, and distracting.

First of all, let's consider the definition of "Ethnic Studies" in lines 4.22-4.27. In general, learning about the diverse cultures and ethnicities that give our country its rich culture and heritage is a wonderful and enriching thing for students. It is also healthy for student to learn about ethnicities different than their own. Therefore, I can agree with ONLY the first phrase of the definition found in lines 4.22-4.23: "Ethnic studies means the critical and interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity..."

However, I do NOT agree with the remainder of definition in lines 4.23-4.27. I do NOT agree with the teaching of "Ethnic Studies" in a way that:

1. *Is Divisive* – Uses the teaching of cultures as a vehicle to teach Cultural Marxism.

Learning about other cultures is great – but NOT if it's going to be used as a tool of division – teaching students to label and divide themselves into oppressed vs. oppressor groups.

It is necessary to teach about our past virtues and our past oppressions – not only the American Slave Trade where white American colonialists enslaved African slaves, but also the Barbary Slave Trade in which Africans oppressed and enslaved white Europeans, etc. – but not in a way that tells students that they are currently in an oppressed or oppressor class because of it.

Furthermore, requiring students to conduct a "power, race, class, and gender analysis" (lines 6.26-6.29) and also connect them to issues of climate and housing further demonstrates the divisive goals behind this ethnic studies requirement.

2. *Is Discriminatory* -- Discriminates against Caucasian descended Americans by excluding them (lines 4. 23-4.24). Caucasian culture is very diverse and should be valued too. The concepts of diversity, tolerance, and inclusion should embrace white people as well as people of color. Otherwise this bill and this requirement is racially discriminatory.

3. *Is Distracting* -- Replaces core academic instruction at a time when over 50% of public students are failing to meet standards in reading, math and science! Lines 4.16-4.19 state that an ethnic studies credit MAY fulfill or replace a social studies, language arts or science credit. Section 5 (lines 7.7-8.16) also requires a cumbersome 25 member ethnic studies working group, which will infringe upon school board's local control with a heavy top down approach. This will only serve to further draw the MDE's and school board's money and efforts away from addressing lagging performance in core academic courses

to scrambling to meet this new burdensome requirement. At a time when schools are already struggling to meet current graduation requirements, it makes no sense to heap on an additional requirement.

For these reasons, I urge you not to support HF 1502 / SF 1476. As written, this new ethnic studies requirement will be ***divisive, discriminatory, and distract*** students and school boards from focusing on regaining lost academic ground.

Sincerely,

Karin Miller

Chairperson Pryor and Education Policy Committee Members,

My name is Dana Smith and I am writing to you as a veteran science teacher, and Advocacy Representative of the MN Science Teachers Association. We are deeply concerned about some of the proposed language in HF1502/SF1476 specifically in Subd. 1 section (g) and Subd.2. The proposed language change to graduation requirements states that an ethnic studies course can replace one credit of science. First and foremost, this is in direct opposition to current graduation requirements and academic standards statutes that clearly mandate that all science standards must be met by all students. Replacing one of three required credits would eliminate the possibility for that mandate to be accomplished. However, this is only the beginning of our concerns, and we would like you to consider the long lasting and detrimental consequences this change will have on student learning and preparation for college and career readiness, as well as severely weaken our state's longstanding commitment to comprehensive, high quality education delivered by well trained and prepared educators.

Minnesota has long been a leader in education. This commitment to our students is affirmed in our call for rigorous academic standards, statewide accountability, and graduation requirements that are specific and meant to prepare ALL Minnesota students for college and career readiness. That includes graduation requirements in core content areas, as well as specific stipulations for all students to have access to all the standards no matter where they attend school. Further, PELSB aligns their licensure requirements to ensure that the teachers for these courses are qualified through an approved content specific teacher preparation program.

The proposed change in Graduation Requirements language outlined in HF1502/SF1476 will effectively remove these assurances and create even more ambiguity and inconsistencies that will lead to inequitable access for our students. Science is unique and requires an approved preparation program, licensure and courses taught to be in alignment to best serve our students. The proposed language in HF1502/SF1476 would eliminate a year's worth of science access, as well as allow districts to offer this ethnic studies class without offering a full complement of science standards. Further, if the approved Department of Education ethnic studies course is designed to "incorporate" science standards, what science content and pedagogical training will be required by these instructors to ensure they are competent and fully trained to teach high school level science courses? As you can see, this would result in removing any alignment with science licensure and teacher preparation programs, and remove any statutory oversight of the content that students have access to in their districts.

MnSTA supports the inclusion of an ethnic studies course for all students, as well as making it a graduation requirement. We agree that all Minnesota students would surely benefit from an such a course, however, replacing core science standards with completely non-aligned courses, and eliminating access to required standards, especially without assurances that access to those standards would be available, will only create greater gaps in learning, underpreparedness in our students for college and careers, and set a precedent for dismantling the rigorous academic standards in core content areas. MnSTA proposes that the Department of Education support the development and implementation of ethnic studies programs in our schools.

HF1502/SF1476 proposed language places an ethnic studies course in Sec.3. Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.024, Subd. 1 Graduation Requirements part (5) as well as in Sec.1. Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.021 Subd. 1 Required Academic Standards part (4) - social studies standard and credit requirements. MnSTA posits that an ethnic studies course should take its credit allotment from social studies credits, rather than taking the place of science core content standards and courses.

Minnesota students deserve our very best in terms of equitable access, teacher preparation and content expertise, consistency and best practices. This proposed legislation is not the way to do right by our students. I am happy to make myself available to you should you require further clarification or have questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dana Smith

Dana Smith

MnSTA Advocacy Chair

dasmedu2018@gmail.com