



February 26, 2025

Chair Ron Kresha  
House Education Finance Committee

**Re: HF29 Repeal of Ethnic Studies**

Chair Kresha and Members,

The Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage urges you to reconsider your support for House File 29, the proposal to repeal Ethnic Studies. Ethnic Studies serves to align educational practices with significant cultural, economic, and technological changes in our state. We believe that investment in Ethnic Studies helps Minnesota meet the educational demands of the twenty-first century.

Ethnic Studies address a gap in how Minnesota schools have taught history and social studies, especially as it relates to the experiences of people of African Heritage and other marginalized communities. We must confront and challenge practices of knowledge that erase and marginalize the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse communities. These are matters of fairness, justice, and truth.

Research has consistently shown that culturally responsive teaching practices, such as those found in Ethnic Studies, benefit all students, especially students of color. When students see their cultures, identities, and histories reflected in the curriculum, it strengthens their sense of belonging, boosts academic performance, and fosters empathy. Conversely, curricula that exclude or marginalize the histories and identities of marginalized groups lead to a narrow, incomplete understanding of the world, and contribute to psychological and social challenges for students who feel invisible or irrelevant in the educational environment.

Investing in Ethnic Studies helps prepare Minnesota's students to engage with and contribute to a diverse and interconnected world while ensuring that particular community and cultural histories are not overlooked or erased. We strongly urge the Minnesota Legislature to support the inclusion of Ethnic Studies in the revised Social Studies Standards. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,  
Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage (CMAH)

*The Minnesota Legislature empowered the Council for Minnesotans of African Heritage to ensure that people of African heritage fully and effectively participate in and equitably benefit from the political, social, and economic resources, policies and procedures of the State of Minnesota. Generally, the Council is charged with the responsibility of:*

- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on issues confronting People of African Heritage;*
- *Advising the Governor and the Legislature on statutes, rules, and revisions to programs to ensure that Black people have access to benefits and services provided to people in Minnesota;*
- *Serving as a liaison to the federal government, local government units and private organizations on matters relating to People of African Heritage in Minnesota;*
- *Implementing programs designed to solve problems of People of African Heritage when authorized by statute, rule or order; and*
- *Publicizing the accomplishments of People of African Heritage and their contributions to the state.*

Feb. 26, 2025

Rep. Ron Kresha, Chair  
Education Finance Committee  
Minnesota House of Representatives

Denise Specht  
*President*

Monica Byron  
*Vice President*

Rodney Rowe  
*Secretary-Treasurer*

Carrie Lucking  
*Executive Director*

VIA EMAIL

Chair Kresha and members of the House Education Finance Committee,

Education Minnesota supports our students' freedom to learn the full story of America, both the triumphs and the times when our nation fell short of our ideals, because only through an honest look at our history and society can students grow into citizens who will avoid the mistakes of the past.

That is why I am writing on behalf of more than 84,000 educators to oppose House File 29, which would suspend the current social studies standards and remove ethnic studies from the standards.

As you know, the standards will guide Minnesota teachers as they create lessons for teaching social studies, including the complex history of our nation. The standards were created by a thorough, open process with the input of experts over several years. They will give students access to suppressed narratives in Minnesota history, kindle critical thinking through exposure to multiple perspectives and encourage active participation in their democracy.

Despite some odd claims to the contrary, these standards are not intended to hurt the feelings of any group of students, and I can assure the committee that Minnesota's educators will continue their commitment to making Minnesota's classrooms safe and welcoming for every student who walks through the schoolhouse door.

Further, the critics are simply wrong when they claim the standards violate the constitutional rights of students, families or staff. Rather, foundational U.S. Supreme Court precedent clearly supports academic standards which include ethnic studies.

The Court has long recognized the right of students to receive information that is available in our society. See, e.g., Bd. of Educ., Island Trees Union Free Sch. Dist. No. 26 v. Pico, 457 U.S. 853, 867 (1982) ("The right to receive ideas is a necessary predicate to the recipient's meaningful exercise of his own rights of speech, press, and political freedom."); Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier, 484 U.S. 260 (1988) (holding that state limitations on curriculum may be upheld

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the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.



**THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL  
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**

only where they are reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns). Moreover, the Court requires deference to state and local authority to establish curricula. See, e.g., Epperson v. Arkansas, 393 U.S. 97, 107 (1968).

Within this framework of rights of students to receive information and of the state to establish standards for learning, courts have both prohibited states from banning students from learning about subjects like ethnic studies and have rejected challenges to state establishment of such programs.

For an example of a challenge to a ban on ethnic studies, after the state of Arizona passed legislation banning the teaching of Mexican American Studies, students successfully challenged the constitutionality of the law under both Fourteenth and First Amendment theories. Arce v. Douglas, 793 F.3d 968, 986 (9th Cir. 2015) (holding state law violates the First Amendment by “chill[ing] the teaching of ethnic studies courses . . . without furthering the legitimate pedagogical purpose of reducing racism”); González, 269 F. Supp. 3d at 972 (holding, on remand, that “A.R.S. § 15-112 was enacted and enforced with a discriminatory purpose” in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment).

Constitutional precedent and the values of our democracy clearly support the teaching of ethnic studies. Beyond legal requirements, even conservative jurists have recognized the value of teaching history from all perspectives. Justice Anthony Kennedy began his concurrence in Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1, 551 U.S. 701, 782 (2007), with the recognition that our country’s “schools strive to teach that our strength comes from people of different races, creeds, and cultures uniting in commitment to the freedom of all.”

The planned social studies standards, including ethnic studies, will provide the framework educators can use to present the parts of American history that have been suppressed or whitewashed. Denying Minnesota students the full scope of history robs them of the freedom to understand the past in ways that will allow them to shape the future for the benefit of all Minnesotans, no matter their background, where they live, who they love, or what they look like.

Together,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Denise Specht". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Denise" being more prominent than the last name "Specht".

Denise Specht, President  
Education Minnesota

Tuesday, February 26th

Dear Education Finance Committee,

My name is Joyel Brujan, and I am a high school student at Edina High School. I want to testify against HF29 as a strong supporter of keeping the Ethnic Studies strand in the Minnesota Social Study Standards.

Ethnic studies is not just another course- as it is the interdisciplinary study of race and ethnicity that sheds light on the histories and experiences of ALL people of color that are often untold and overlooked. Race has been the foundation of not only the United States, but the entirety of the world. By removing Ethnic Studies from the Minnesota Social Study Standards is the formal removal of critical knowledge that leaves us without understanding who we are individually, and how we have evolved as a society.

It leaves the teaching of ethnic studies to be optional and ensures that many students will never be exposed to it, and what would remain would be an incomplete history that would prevent many students from grasping the realities of our past. Ethnic Studies fills in the gaps that traditional history classes keep out. I am currently taking African American Studies, which is not a course that teaches the “evil of race and ethnicity,” but as one that delves into the power and significance of race and ethnicity in shaping our present. The course itself is an ethnic studies course that combines history marked with struggles of racial inequality and hierarchy, and its impact on today's progress and the path to a more equitable future. To properly address modern issues, it is essential to acknowledge their deep roots in the past.

Implementing HF29 is also permitting for the erasure of marginalized groups and their voices in history curricula, especially Indigenous people. History cannot be told solely through its achievements, but the obstacles and challenges that got us to this point because it is equally important. While Minnesota American Indian Tribes and communities will be under review to be taught for their “contributions,” what risks left being untold is the hardship, tenacity, and their powerful fight for justice that have defined their history.

As a student who had previously taken the traditional US history course, I had received an overview of events that had taken place and the people involved, but had failed to learn the harsh brutality and resistance that had transpired in the making of the United States. Race was only a subject within pivotal moments in Civil Rights or wars, but never as a comprehensive lesson about the contributions made by people and groups of color that were meaningful to the events with their own histories. Ethnic studies is a source of empowerment. It goes beyond surface-level narratives, and offers deeper understanding of the nuances particularly in the fight for inclusion

and equality while embracing all people of races, gender, and sexuality. It reveals the full truth of America's history.

The introduction of African American Studies as the first ethnic studies course acknowledged by the College Board is a testament to the importance of these standards. African Americans and all people of color have built the United States, and their connection is greatly tied to larger discussions of people and race. Ethnic studies is representation. It creates an environment for integral discussions and deep evaluation about our personal identities, justice, and the society we want to build. Every person in Minnesota deserves to feel seen; to be represented in the history they learn. Without inclusion, marginalized groups are invisible and disconnected to our own society.

To repeal ethnic studies requirements and cancel financial support for the programs, is a failure of the education system. A failure to students and their right to an adequate and thorough education.

Respectfully,  
Joyel Brujan



February 25, 2025

Dear Chair Kresha and Members of the Minnesota House Education Finance Committee:

I am writing to express Jewish Community Action's strong opposition to HF29, which would remove ethnic studies as an academic standard for Minnesota students and risk \$1,000,000 in funding to Minnesota schools. Most importantly, this bill would deny Minnesota students a complete and accurate education. Removing ethnic studies prioritizes exclusion over education.

Jewish Community Action is the Jewish voice in Minnesota's movement for economic, racial and social justice. We have been organizing for equity and justice since our founding in 1995, recognizing that the Jewish community's ability to live, work, learn and thrive in Minnesota is only possible if every marginalized community in Minnesota has the same rights, privileges and opportunities. The currently legislated integrated ethnic studies curriculum will help prepare Minnesota students to live in an increasingly multiracial, multifaith state and country, and create a more connected and competent citizenry.

HF29 sets Minnesota students back. It ignores community wishes, puts funding at risk, and prioritizes division and exclusion over education. On behalf of Jewish Community Action's 5,500 members and stakeholders, we insist that you reject HF29 and support Minnesota students and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Beth Gendler", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Beth Gendler

Executive Director

[beth@jewishcommunityaction.org](mailto:beth@jewishcommunityaction.org)

651-699-6742

## Testimony in Opposition to HF 29

Members of the House Education Finance Committee,

My name is Betty Greene. I am a community member and former school psychologist. I am writing in opposition to HF 29.

It is important for every Minnesota student to succeed in school. Many students do not hear or see their stories, history, and culture in the school curriculum, and it can be hard for them to stay engaged with schoolwork that does not feel relevant to them and/or actively excludes their history. At past education committee hearings, I heard many students say that an ethnic studies class was the first time they saw themselves represented and it made a huge difference in their school success.

HF29 undermines the Minnesota education system by prioritizing exclusion over education. It denies students a complete education and defunds critical programs that ensure our schools reflect the rich perspectives of our communities. HF29 is a deliberate attempt to roll back progress and erase history.

I ask you to protect funding for ethnic studies, maintain ethnic studies in the academic standards, and allow it to count toward graduation requirements. Every student deserves a full and honest education that prepares them for the future. Ethnic studies classes can enhance critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which help prepare all students for the real world.

Please reject HF29. Instead of erasing history, we should be investing in ethnic studies, supporting teachers, and ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed. Our economy and our society as a whole need everyone to succeed.



My name is Aditi Jha and I am a sophomore at Edina High School. I am testifying in opposition to House File 29. I believe a lot of the opposition to ethnic studies results from misinformation, so I would like to disprove some misconceptions from the last hearing.

Ethnic studies does not remove white history. It just includes the history of others. Take it from a student; we are already taught the dominant perspective in Social Studies. We are educated about the U.S.'s victories, our founders, the American Revolution, Manifest Destiny, the motivations of colonizing nations, and all of the subjects critics claim ethnic studies standards would eliminate. These narratives have always been and will continue to be central to our education, with or without ethnic studies. The standards do not replace or silence existing perspectives, they *expand* them.

Proponents of this bill claim the standards advocate for a “single perspective” and are derived from a biased framework that only prioritizes “one view.” To the contrary, ethnic studies is *critical* to ensure students are given *more* than the one view we are given without it. At no point does ethnic studies curriculum tell white students that they should feel guilty, have to act a certain way to make up for inherent privilege, or are forever condemned to an oppressor group. Such claims are baseless fearmongering. In Germany, the *extensive* education about the atrocities of the Holocaust has not caused an epidemic of mental health crises among German youth, just higher awareness of how to recognize and avoid the signs of perceived racial superiority from rising again.

Some claim ethnic studies politicizes our classrooms. However, history is *inherently* political. The curriculum I learn from every day already reflects the dominant political lens. Ethnic studies isn't about “pushing an agenda,” it's about telling the full truth.

Furthermore, ethnic studies does not foster division between white students and students of color; rather, it illuminates the inherent division that exists and has always existed. Ignoring systemic disparities does not eliminate them—it entrenches them. Author and former professor Sara Ahmed articulates this concept well. “When you expose a problem, you pose a problem,” she writes. “It might then be assumed that the problem would go away if you would just stop talking about it or if you went away.” She's right: defunding ethnic studies does not resolve inequities in our curriculum—it simply ensures they remain unexamined and unchallenged.

Proponents of this bill also claim it's taking the focus away from decreasing literacy rates or poor reading or math skills. This idea is completely unfounded. In reality, ethnic studies gives students the critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and communication skills that help them succeed in other subjects. Also, there is no evidence or research anywhere supporting the notion that including ethnic studies standards as a Social Studies requirement negatively affects performance in any other subject.

Real data is conspicuously missing from emotionally charged testimonies against ethnic studies. *Actual research* based on *empirical evidence* demonstrates the variety of positive results of ethnic studies across the nation. [Research published by](#) the National Education Association shows how ethnic studies significantly improves critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding. A Stanford University [study found](#) long term improvements in graduation,

academic performance, and attendance. Rare, cherry-picked instances of ethnic studies being improperly implemented or misused should not overshadow the overwhelming evidence of its success in hundreds of classrooms nationwide.

I, like many of my classmates, *want* to receive an education that reflects multiple perspectives. I *want* to learn all of our history, not just the dominant historical narrative that has been perpetuated for generations. Lawmakers should not deprive me and others of this opportunity based on unsubstantiated, speculative fearmongering lacking any factual basis.

In her testimony in support of this bill, Karin Miller of Dakota County states, “We are all equal and given the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” to say that ethnic studies is unnecessary because we are all promised equality already. Although these rights *are* foundational to the U.S., they have long been prevented from being equally accessible to all Americans due to systemic legal structures whose segregation of income, housing, education, healthcare, and more have had persistent and far-reaching impacts. Miller’s statement reflects precisely the kind of privileged worldview ethnic studies seeks to contextualize and examine. We all deserve equal rights as promised by the Constitution, but as Ahmed says, we can’t solve a problem we refuse to acknowledge in the first place.

Thank you for your consideration and I urge you to reject HF29.

# Testimony to the Minnesota Committee on Education Finance

## HF29

### In Support of Maintaining and Expanding Ethnic Studies Programs

Honorable Chairperson and Committee Members,

Unfortunately I am unable to get away from school but as a teacher of 29 years I feel the need to advocate for the continued funding and expansion of ethnic studies programs in our schools.

First and foremost, education pays! Based on the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unemployment and earnings are directly related to education.

<https://www.bls.gov/emp/chart-unemployment-earnings-education.htm>

In Minnesota we have been struggling with the “achievement gap” for years. Additionally, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, MN had dropped from 6th in the Nation to 19th in the Nation on National Test scores in the last 10 years.

What we know is that Ethnic Studies Program have demonstrated measurable impacts on student achievement. Schools implementing these curricula have reported:

- Increased attendance rates
- Improved GPA across multiple subjects
- Higher graduation rates, particularly among historically marginalized students

These improvements translate directly into financial benefits through reduced costs associated with grade repetition, remedial education, dropout prevention programs as well as reductions in vandalism and other petty crimes. ([Article 1](#), [Article 2](#) and [Article 3](#))

### Dismantling The Fear Of Ethnic Studies

When people fear the truth, that is when society must be most alert. It is natural to fear change.

Many who oppose ethnic studies do so from a position of misunderstanding what these programs actually teach. There's often a fear that ethnic studies will:

- Replace rather than complement traditional curriculum
- Divide students along ethnic lines rather than build understanding
- Teach political ideology rather than historical and cultural literacy

This uncertainty about content and outcomes creates resistance, especially when opponents haven't personally experienced such courses.

For some, ethnic studies represent a perceived loss of cultural centrality. The inclusion of diverse perspectives can be interpreted as diminishing the importance of traditionally centered narratives. This taps into loss aversion - the psychological tendency to weigh potential losses more heavily than gains.

Historical narratives shape national identity. Resistance often comes from those who see themselves as guardians of a particular narrative about American history or values. Ethnic studies challenges simplified narratives and introduces complexity that can feel threatening to this sense of control.

Ethnic studies often examines historical injustices and ongoing inequities. The discomfort this examination produces can generate resistance - it's psychologically easier to avoid confronting difficult aspects of our shared history.

Yes, Ethnic studies will present different views and different aspects of history and literature. But that doesn't make it wrong. Learning about ethnicity isn't changing history, or changing literature, it is opening it up. Reading authors of a variety of backgrounds gives us perspective.

Part of why Ethnic studies keep students engaged is because for the first time students learn about how the mosaic of ethnicities represented in the school are also represented in literature and history. That is what makes students lean in.

What those who fear Ethnic Studies do, is take one reading, or one lesson and elevate that.

Do not give into that fear

**MY REQUEST:** Rather than conjecture... ask to see the curriculum and lesson plans of the teachers. But to paraphrase the supreme court Miller Test from *Miller v California*: Look at the lessons as a whole. Look at a whole unit, not just one activity or reading taken out of context.

Thank you for reading my Testimony

Claude Sigmund  
Edina Public Schools

To the Chair and Committee members,

I am writing in support of HF29 the delay of Social Study Standards and the deletion of the recently added Ethnic Studies portion. Standards are reviewed and revised every 10 years. Many Minnesotans have spent the last few years working to voice their concerns over the drastic changes that took place in this revision of the Social study Standards. In particular to the newly added Ethnic Study section.

We are concerned over the continuous theme of replacing objective history with subjective narratives; the prevalence of negativity, the push toward activism, the overcorrection of once marginalized voices, and the relentless focus on America's mistakes instead of all the Good this country and her citizens have done for one another and the world. **I also noticed that these benchmarks do not always align with State Statutes of being Objective, Clear, Concise and Age Appropriate.**

The Ethnic Studies portion in particular emphasize what divides us as a society instead of what unites us as fellow human beings. It is human nature to copy what we learn; and if all we are teaching is to see division and differences then I am greatly concerned for our future as a nation. Instead, we need to focus on what lifts us up as a society and focus on morality, what unites us as a country, and ways to encourage and lift each other up. We do not need to tear one group down to give another group a leg up. We succeeded by lifting everyone up. We are in this together.

Sara Bertschinger

Pine Island, MN

Karin Miller, Faith in Action

Good Afternoon, Chair Kresha and Members of the Education Finance Committee,

My name is Karin Miller. I am a wife, mother of six, teacher, and author of Faith in Action Substack. Even though I currently am home educating my children, I chose to speak out because I care about the entire generation my children are growing up with. Together, they *ARE* our future / the future of America.

In 2023, I testified in opposition to the Ethnic Studies requirement of HF 1269 (lines 11.4-11.10 and 11.29-12.12) because it would be taught through a lens of critical race theory. It teaches race and racism as a political force, along with other areas of stratification such as gender identity.

This is racial discrimination which violates federal civil rights law. In essence, ethnic studies ushers the teaching of cultural Marxism into our classrooms, which will only serve to further divide our children and our society based on immutable characteristics.

Surely we do not want to implement an ethnic studies standard that indoctrinates our students that they are forever trapped by their skin color to be inherently an oppressor or forever the oppressed.

Let us teach the next generation the truth – that each of us is part of one human race, just with differing levels of melanin. That despite our external differences and our past histories, we all have the same potential on the inside to either become a noble instrument of what is just and good, or to become a cruel instrument of evil and vice.

This is the heritage of every young American! – That we can stand shoulder to shoulder – like the white person who realized that slavery was wrong and the person of color who longed to be free.

Together we can overcome the injustice of racial bias to claim the birthright of EVERY American – that ALL are created equal and given the inalienable Rights of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness!

Teaching ethnic studies through a lens of critical race theory will only deepen the divisions between us and enslave us all. Let us therefore choose to link arms and break free!

Thank you for voting in favor of HF 29.

Hello and Thank You for reading my testimony before the Education Finance Committee in support of H.F. 29.

I am a life-long resident of Minnesota and a tax paying grandmother of two wonderful grandchildren looking to enter the public school system in a couple of years.

The new Minnesota Academic Standards in Social Studies has me very concerned about how our precious children are being taught through the lens of social justice by including the new standard of Ethnic Studies which is a polite term for Critical Race Theory (CRT).

The reality is, is that many of our kids cannot read nor do math at grade level, and yet, the Minnesota Department of Education thought embedding Ethnic Studies would somehow help our kids. I disagree and find the addition of Ethnic Studies highly divisive and full of critical justice ideology. I do not believe that dividing our kids into the “oppressed” or the “oppressor” is conducive to inclusiveness and the golden rule of treating others the way you would want to be treated. This ideology divides rather than unites, it is not forward thinking.

As an example out of the new standards for kindergartner’s, under the standard titled Resistance, it states, “Describe how individuals and communities have fought for freedom and liberation against systemic and coordinated exercises of power locally and globally. Identify strategies or times that have resulted in lasting change. Organize with others to engage in activities that could further the rights and dignity of all.” This is absurd for a kindergartner.

Our teachers have enough on their plates as it is. Teachers need to focus on core areas of study such as reading, math and the sciences. They should not be burdened by trying to add another piece of curriculum to their already full schedule and worry if they are being offensive or not. It would be like walking on egg shells all day long.

Thank You.

Lisa Lusk

Jackson, MN