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February 26, 2025

Representative Ron Kresha, Chair  
House Education Finance Committee  
State Capitol Room 120  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Statement in support of HF 29

Chairman Kresha and House Committee Members,

My name is Katherine Kersten, and I am a senior policy fellow at Center of the American Experiment. I am writing today in support of HF 29.

The way Ethnic Studies is sold, and what it really is, are very different things.

Ethnic Studies supporters make two primary claims.

First, we need Ethnic Studies because our students need to learn “warts and all” American history—about, say, WWII Japanese internment camps, lynchings, Indian relocation and reservations.

But these topics and others like them are *already taught* in our schools. In fact, they are *required* under our state’s current Social Studies standards, which were adopted in 2012. [See list of examples, attached]

HF 29’s focus is very different: It calls for the pausing of Social Studies standards and the repeal of laws that mandate instruction in Liberated Ethnic Studies—in every grade and subject, including math, science, language arts, arts and physical education. [Minn. Stat. § 120B.021, subd. 4(k)]

Liberated Ethnic Studies teaches every subject through the “lens” of “race,” “power” and “resistance,” according to MDE’s Ethnic Studies Working Group’s new Ethnic Studies implementation framework. (A “lens,” in this sense, means distorting or omitting facts to conform to a particular ideological agenda.)

Specifically, Ethnic Studies “center[s] a power analysis of race..and racial formation” and “how these produce marginalization, discrimination and oppression and construc[t] identity.” A “core” Ethnic Studies tenet is “activism and resistance” to our nation’s fundamental institutions.



Minnesota's recently adopted Social Studies standards are permeated by this extremist, politicized agenda.

For example, a new Ethnic Studies standard entitled "Resistance" requires K-12 students to "describe how individuals and communities have fought for freedom and liberation against systemic and coordinated exercises of power locally and globally."

Typical Ethnic Studies grade-level benchmarks include the following:

- First graders—six-year-olds—must "identify examples of ethnicity, equality, liberation and systems of power" and "use those examples to construct meanings for those terms."
- High schoolers must "examine the construction of racialized hierarchies based on colorism and dominant European beauty standards and values."

We can look to the St. Paul Public Schools (SPPS) to see what our children's classrooms will look like after statewide implementation of Liberated Ethnic Studies. SPPS's required Ethnic Studies course does not cultivate mutual understanding but pushes students to form tribalized identities and stokes defiance of authority.

The curriculum exhorts 16-year-olds to "build" a race-and ethnicity-based "narrative of transformative resistance," to "challenge and expose" "systems of inequality," and to "resist all systems of oppressive power rooted in racism through collective action and change."

Related artwork, labeled "seeds of resistance," promotes the liberated "abolitionist" agenda, and features protest signs that read "No Bans/No Walls" and "Abolish Prison."

The second reason we need Ethnic Studies, its supporters claim, is that it allows students to "see themselves in the curriculum"—to learn who they really are, to discover "their identity."

It's true that Ethnic Studies puts student "identity" front and center. But what kind of identity? Racialized "identity construction" is at the heart of Liberated Ethnic Studies, which relentlessly drills into young people's heads—starting in kindergarten—that "who they are" is a function of their skin color and ethnicity.

A new K-12 Ethnic Studies standard entitled "Identity" makes this clear:

Analyze the ways power and language construct the social identities of race, religion, geography, ethnicity and gender. Apply these understandings to one's own social identities and other groups living in Minnesota, centering those whose stories and histories have been marginalized, erased or ignored.



Using soft, therapeutic language, Ethnic Studies pressures students to embrace a divisive, tribalized identity based on crude racial stereotypes. For some, depending on their skin color, this will be rooted in guilt and shame, for others, in grievance and resentment.

In this way, Ethnic Studies manipulates and reshapes the psychology of vulnerable, inexperienced young people in order to line them up behind an extremist ideological agenda.

Minority students will suffer most from Ethnic Studies. It will deprive them of their birthright as Americans, conditioning them to view themselves as oppressed victims, instead of teaching them the “success formula”—character, resilience and hard work—that has lifted so many Americans in the face of discrimination and adversity.

Liberated Ethnic Studies will mandate racialized groupthink throughout our state’s public schools. I urge you to protect Minnesota’s next generation from this profoundly damaging ideology by supporting HF 29.

Sincerely,

Katherine Kersten

Katherine Kersten  
Senior Policy Fellow  
Center of the American Experiment



### Minnesota's Current K-12 Social Studies Standards

Examples of “warts-and-all” history that Minnesota’s current Social Studies standards (the “2012 standards”) require students to learn:

- 7th grade U.S. history benchmark: “Outline the causes and conduct of World War II including the nations involved, major political and military figures and key battles, and the Holocaust. For example: D-Day, Iwo Jima, *treatment of Japanese-Americans*” [emphasis added] (7.4.4.21.4)
- High school U.S. history benchmark: “Evaluate the economic impact of the war, including its impact on the role of women and disenfranchised communities in the United States (Great Depression and World War II: 1920-1945) For example: *Treatment of Japanese-Americans*” [emphasis added] (9.4.4.21.6)
- 6th grade U.S. history benchmark: “Describe how the major cultural and social transformations of the 1920s changed the lifestyle of Minnesotans. For example: *the Duluth lynchings*” [emphasis added] (6.4.4.21.1)
- 7th grade U.S. history benchmark: “Analyze the effects of racism and legalized segregation on American society, including the compromise of 1876, the rise of “Jim Crow,” immigration restriction, and *the relocation of American Indian tribes to reservations.*” [emphasis added] (7.4.4.20.4)

Examples of how minority students currently “see themselves in the curriculum”:

- 6th grade U.S. history benchmark: “Identify the push-pull factors that bring *the Hmong, East African, Hispanic, Asian Indian and other immigrants and refugees* [emphasis added] to Minnesota; compare and contrast their experiences with those of earlier Minnesota immigrant groups in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.” (6.4.4.23.1)
- High school U.S. history benchmark: “Explain the roots of the *various civil rights movements, including African-American, Native American, women, Latino American, and Asian American.*” [emphasis added] (9.4.4.22.5)



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February 17, 2025

Representative Peggy Bennett, Chair  
House Education Policy Committee  
State Capitol Room G23  
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Subject: Statement in support of HF 29

Representative Bennett and House Committee Members,

My name is Katherine Kersten, and I am a senior policy fellow at Center of the American Experiment. I am writing today in support of HF 29.

Minnesota policymakers have entrenched Liberated Ethnic Studies ideology in every grade and academic subject in our state's public schools—by legal mandate in 2023 and K-12 Social Studies standards in 2024.

They sold Ethnic Studies as promoting racial understanding—something all kind, empathetic Minnesotans should support.

But from the beginning, MDE and bill authors knowingly gave power to design and lead the new Ethnic Studies regime to political advocacy groups that intend to remake our schools—and our society—by replacing academic instruction with K-12 education centered on activism, resistance and “race-and-power analysis,” starting in kindergarten.

Now MDE's handpicked “Ethnic Studies Working Group” has completed its 62-page framework for implementing Ethnic Studies across our state.

It's the product of members and allies of the Minnesota Ethnic Studies Coalition, whose leader, Brian Lozenski—a primary Framework author—has called for the overthrow of the U.S. government.

Here's what our students will be learning under the Framework:

- Third graders will study “solidarity movements like the Third World Liberation Front and the Delano grape strike,” and create “protest” “dances of resistance.”
- Sixth graders will learn about “Black Power as resistance,” “explore George Floyd Square,” and “drive around the Twin Cities” looking at “murals combatting racism.”



- Ninth graders will study lynchings in Duluth in 1920. The Framework never teaches students about America's Civil Rights laws.

Teachers must undergo intrusive, cult-like professional development as a condition of employment. They will be pressured to “continuously reflect on my identities and relationships to structure and power,” and develop the tools to “challenge white supremacy.”

Minnesota's new authoritarian Ethnic Studies regime is a disastrous mistake.

It will profoundly damage students of all backgrounds—especially at a time when a majority can't read or do math at grade level. It is also a clear violation of a new executive order, which will put federal funds at risk for all Minnesota schools.

Back in your district, how will you explain to appalled parents why you didn't correct course on this travesty when you had the opportunity to do so? I urge you to support HF 29 for the good of all our state's children.

Sincerely,

Katherine Kersten

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Senior Policy Fellow  
Center of the American Experiment