

Madame Chair and Members of the Education Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. My name is Karin Miller. I am a wife, mother, and Educator from Dakota County.

I speak today to raise concern about the ethnic studies component of HF 1269 in lines 11.4-11.10 and 11.29-12.12 because it will be taught through a lens of critical race theory. Even though I am currently home educating my children, I choose to speak out because I care about the entire generation that my children are growing up with. They are our neighbors, our relatives, and most importantly, they are the future of America.

To be sure, students learning about cultures and ethnicities different from their own is a beautiful and valuable lesson. And every student should have the opportunity to see themselves and their ethnic heritage as a part of the diverse history of our country.

But we must think carefully about what lesson we are teaching students about what makes them who they are. Do we truly believe that their internal beliefs, their character, and their future actions in life are predetermined by external factors like the level of melanin in their skin? Let us not teach our students that they are trapped by their skin color to be inherently an oppressor or forever the oppressed.

Let us teach them the truth – that each one of us is descended from one human race, just with varying levels of melanin. That despite our differences on the outside, despite our past histories, we all have the same potential on the inside to either become an instrument of what is just and true and right, or become an instrument of human selfishness, greed and oppression.

This is the heritage of every young American! – That we can stand shoulder to shoulder – the white person who realizes that slavery is wrong, the person of color who wants to be free – and together we can overcome the injustice of racism to claim the birthright of EVERY American – that ALL men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with the unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness!

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

Therefore, I encourage you to remove the ethnic studies portion, or revise it so it is not written in the language of critical race theory. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals



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(Via email delivery)

March 7, 2023

Senator Steve Cwodzinski, Chair
Education Policy Committee
3207 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Senator Julia Coleman
Ranking Minority Member
Education Policy Committee
2302 Minnesota Senate Bldg.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Concerns on HF1269 SF1311

Dear Cwodzinski and Minority Ranking Member Coleman:

Minnesota's secondary school principals are deeply concerned by several provisions contained in SF 1311. If enacted, we believe the provisions will have significant unintended consequences on individual students, school climate, safety and resources. We have been actively engaged in discussions to change the provisions, but to date we have not seen any significant progress in these discussions.

The language in the bill requires the use of non-exclusionary discipline in all cases. Non-exclusionary discipline is an effective tool used by principals every day in Minnesota schools. But many cases involve issues that warrant the suspension of a student. We believe it is best left to the discretion of school principals when the cases involve racism, sexual harassment, bullying, drug possession, theft, or threats. The bill takes the option of suspension away in the majority of these cases.

Minnesota principals are committed to addressing the issue of racial disparities in suspensions. We believe the better focus would be to identify those schools with significant disparities and provide supports to those sites. Such a plan would mirror our states approach to other areas such as attendance, graduation rates and academic progress.

We are concerned that the addition of a 72-hour appeals process for all decisions regarding discipline will result in a misdirection of resources. The bill mandates this new complaint review process with no funding. Schools are required to make conclusions, findings and recommendations on any discipline complaint within 3 days under the bill. We believe existing processes are sufficient.

Robert Driver
MASSP Executive Director

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MINNESOTA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION

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March 7, 2023

Rep. Laurie Pryor, Chair
House Education Policy Committee
571 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Rep. Peggy Bennett, Republican Lead
House Education Policy Committee
307 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN, 55155

Re: Concerns on HF1269 and SF1311

Dear Chair Pryor and Lead Bennett:

Minnesota's elementary principals have the responsibility for the education and safety of our students. We are deeply concerned that multiple provisions in HF 1269 (DE1) may have unintended consequences toward the completion of those goals.

The current language in the bill prohibits all suspensions in grades K-3. For reasons that are unclear to us, the bill only authorizes expulsions and exclusions. Districts rarely use expulsion or exclusion. Suspension, however, is a different matter. Often students need to be out of school for a day or more for safety reasons, both for the involved student and for other students. The language in the bill would prohibit suspending a student in any circumstances. While MESPA supports limiting suspensions to those cases where a student poses a safety threat, we cannot support the language in the bill resulting in a total prohibition of suspensions.

Similarly, MESPA supports appropriate limitations on the withholding of recess but believes again, the standard should allow withholding recess in those cases where a student "*poses a safety threat*". The bill authorizes the withholding of recess only where the student "*causes or is likely to cause serious physical harm to other students or staff*".

These issues are important to all of our communities. We hope in the weeks ahead the result can benefit all students and all of our school communities.

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