

Michigan Education Groups Oppose Senate Bill 460 and House Bill 5097

The Michigan Council for the Social Studies (MCSS), the Michigan Council for History Education (MCHE), Michigan Council for Teachers of English (MCTE), Michigan State Social Studies Supervisors Association (MSSSA), and the Michigan Association of College Teacher Educators (MACTE) stand united in our opposition to Senate Bill 460 and House Bill 5097. Our members are classroom teachers PK-12, social studies and English curriculum directors for districts and Intermediate School Districts, teacher educators in higher education, and others who have a passion for education in Michigan. We provide high-quality professional development for educators, annual conferences with nationally recognized keynote speakers, virtual webinars with thought leaders in the state, and peer-reviewed academic journals.

The purpose of education, and social studies education in particular, is to promote the knowledge, skills, intellectual processes, and dispositions required of people to be actively engaged in fulfilling their responsibility of civic participation. As members of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world, young people need to learn how to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good. We support and advocate for those seeking to fulfill these purposes of teaching and learning in our schools and communities.

Therefore, we firmly stand in opposition to these bills for the following reasons:

SB 460 and HB 5097 misconstrue Critical Race Theory (CRT).

According to the SB 460, "Critical race theory means anti-American and racist theories, reading guides, lesson plans, activities, guided discussions, and other resources that promote that the United States is a fundamentally racist nation, that the United States Constitution is a fundamentally racist document, and that certain races are fundamentally oppressive or oppressed." While HB 5097 does not directly mention CRT, it refers to instituting a "core academic curriculum that must not, in any way, include any form of race or gender stereotyping that could be understood as implicit bias or gender stereotyping." However, CRT is not a curriculum or set of lesson plans. Instead, it is a lens--a conceptual framework--used by educational scholars in academic research to understand systemic racism in our country. CRT does not appear as a concept to teach in the Michigan K-12 Social Studies Standards.

SB 460 and HB 5097 threaten local control of educational curriculum and limit teachers' rights to academic freedom.

SB 460 proposes restricting classroom use of the 1619 Project, which is a resource that could be used to teach about slavery, race, and racism. Similarly, HB 5097 bans teaching that "race and gender is a better predictor of outcome than character, work ethic or skills," which is essentially banning the teaching students that white supremacy and sexism exists. These components limit educators' freedom to use professional judgement (entrusted to them by the local school boards who hired them) to determine which curricular materials work best for their students. Attempts by politicians to discredit the professionalism of educators and insert influence in classrooms are not in the best interests of our students and professionals in the

classroom. Such attempts contradict and undermine the [Michigan Educational Code of Ethics](#) accepted by educators as their professional rights and responsibilities.

SB 460 and HB 5097 require educators to teach social studies inaccurately.

SB 460's language is unnecessarily extreme and exaggerated. Educators do not teach that the United States is "a racist country" or that founding documents are "fundamentally racist." Instead, they are honest about the systemic racism that has been a part of our past and present. HB 5097 is inaccurately based on individual anecdotal instances of race and racism. It would restrict allowing students to wrestle with complicated truths of our country's history, including systematic oppression and discrimination. We believe good educators do not call individual students racist or shame them for their race but instead guide them to recognize their conscious and unconscious biases to interact with others who are different from themselves. Accurate and truthful representation of historical events is necessary and beneficial for all students to learn. Educators have a pivotal role in providing high-quality, inquiry-based learning for their students in the classroom and making decisions to provide current and factual content to students. We do not support the censorship or suppression of factual information that prevents students from engaging in inquiries for making decisions and drawing conclusions.

SB 460 and HB 5097 directly contradicts statements made by State Superintendent Dr. Michael Rice.

On August 11, 2021, during the Michigan State Board of Education meeting, Dr. Rice, State Superintendent in Michigan, gave [statements](#) supporting educators in their teaching of accurate and hard history. His remarks are in direct opposition to the content of SB 460 and HB 5097. He referenced that critical race theory is "not a curricular issue" and that "race and racism should most assuredly be a part of a comprehensive social studies curriculum." And that "educators have not just the right but the responsibility to teach the breadth of our history." [MCSS has publicly affirmed Dr. Rice's statements.](#)

Conclusion

We support education that prepares students to be informed, active participants in our democracy. Education that supports and maintains democracy must include teaching and learning that: allows for the free flow of ideas; recognizes the importance of teaching about race, racism, and discrimination; involves the analysis of issues, topics, and challenges from multiple perspectives; and embraces civic discourse of complicated truths. Therefore, we strongly oppose Senate Bill 460 and House Bill 5097 that prohibit teaching the core democratic values that we hold to be true.

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