

KIMBERLY A. WILLIAMS
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
19th District



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE OF DELAWARE
411 LEGISLATIVE AVENUE
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

COMMITTEES
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Labor, Vice-Chair
Appropriations
Housing & Community Affairs
Joint Finance
Manufactured Housing
Revenue & Finance

House Education Committee Meeting Minutes 3.31.21

Chair Williams called the virtual meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. She stated that the meeting was planned in accordance with HCR 1 and took the roll call of the committee's members. Members present included Vice-Chair Chukwuocha and Reps. Bolden, Matthews, Heffernan, Kowalko, Lynn, Morrison, Osienski, Bush, Moore, Briggs King, Collins, Postles, Ramone, Shupe, and Smith.

Chair Williams announced that Reps. Bolden, Smith, and Hensley were initially absent due to their participation in another committee meeting. Reps. Bolden and Smith later attended.

Chair Williams introduced **HB 128, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN**. Sponsor Rep. Griffith explained that the bill allows for special education services for those who are entitled to them until age 21 and are set to age out of their services this school year (2020-2021). The extension is being recommended to last through the 2021-2022 school year due to time being lost during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of those requiring occupational training and other services were not able to gain the depth of experience needed in order to achieve their individualized education program (IEP) goals, and those individuals and their IEP teams may want or need more time to do attain those benchmarks.

Rep. Briggs King thanked Rep. Griffith for her work on the bill and asked for clarification on the "related services" mentioned in the bill. Rep. Griffith stated that the services are individualized and are enumerated in student IEPs.

Bill co-sponsor Rep. Heffernan voiced her support of the bill, stating that this particular population of students has been especially impacted by the year-long pandemic because vocational opportunities were not available. Rep. Moore also gave her support but asked that the language in line 23 ("disruptive child") be amended so as to not marginalize students. Chair Williams asked if the incoming American Rescue Plan funds could be used to fund this extension and Rep. Griffith responded that she hopes those funds could be utilized.

With no more questions from committee members, Chair Williams opened the floor to public comment. Ruth Lavelle stated she supports the bill, as did Robert Overmiller. Dr. Tammy Croce stated that the Delaware Association of School Administrators (DASA) has no official position on the bill but has concerns regarding language and funding. Dr. John Marinucci of the Delaware School Board Association (DSBA) voiced his support but asked that the bill's language be fixed to limit liability. Steven Washington also gave his support.

A motion was made by Rep. Briggs King and seconded by Rep. Shupe to release HB 198 from committee. The motion carried. Yes = 13 (Chair Williams, Vice Chair Chukwuocha, Reps. Matthews, Kowalko, Lynn, Morrison, Osienski, Moore, Briggs King, Collins, Postles, Ramone, Shupe); No = 0; Absent = 5 (Reps. Bolden, Heffernan, Smith, Hensley, Bush). The bill was released from committee with a F=4, M=7, U=0 vote.

Next, Chair Williams introduced **HB 120, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO THE RED CLAY CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT BUS SAFETY CAMERA PILOT PROGRAM**. This bill would allow stop arm-mounted cameras on Red Clay Consolidated School District (RCCSD) school busses to record drivers who fail to stop when a school bus is stopped and displaying flashing lamps to take on or discharge school children and assess a civil penalty as punishment rather than a misdemeanor charge. Chair Williams continued, stating that a similar program in Maryland issued over 51,000 tickets over a two-year period.

Dr. Ted Amman of the RCCSD explained that this is an addition to “Laura’s Law,” which was previously passed. He continued, saying that 40 busses have been outfitted with these cameras during the 2020-2021 school year. Even though there have been far fewer days of school this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic (58 days), the cameras have recorded 186 offenses. Dr. Amman added that over 20 states currently have similar programs.

Rep. Bolden voiced her support on behalf of her Wilmington constituents, and Rep. Shupe indicated that these cameras could result in lower costs for law enforcement because no officers will be required to track down offenders, then asked when the program could possibly be instituted statewide. Bill sponsor Chair Williams answered that RCCSD will fully implement the program in this fall, allowing time for kinks to be worked out before hopefully implementing the program statewide during the 2022-2023 school year.

Rep. Briggs King voiced her support and asked if language in line 39 should include that drivers will be recorded on both sides of the school busses in addition to front and back. Chair Williams answered that she would speak to the house attorney about that change and follow up.

Chair Williams then opened public comment on HB 120. Robert Overmiller gave his support and stated that, as a former transportation director for the Cape Henlopen district, he knows this issue firsthand and knows from experience that cameras are successful in catching offenders. Sarah Bucic of the Delaware PTA voiced her support, as did Dr. Tammy Croce of DASA, Jose Matthews (RCCSD School Board member), and Dr. John Marinucci (DSBA). Laird Stabler of the Delaware School Bus Contractors Association gave his support and asked that camera maintenance be included in funding. Steven Washington, Amy Gallagher, Kendall Massett of the Delaware Charter School Network (DCSN), and Dorrell Green (Superintendent of RCCSD) all voiced their support.

Chair Williams indicated that the goal is to push the program out to the entire state, and Rep. Bolden stated that the RCCSD pilot in Wilmington will provide valuable insight for the other four districts operating in the city. Rep. Collins asked if some of the offenses were due to confusion over whether to stop on larger multi-lane roads and highways. Chair Williams responded by saying that the video included in the original bill proposal indicates that is not the case.

A motion was made by Rep. Bolden and seconded by Rep. Shupe to release HB 120 from committee. The motion carried. Yes = 14 (Chair Williams, Vice Chair Chukwuocha, Reps. Bolden, Matthews, Kowalko, Lynn, Morrison, Osienski, Moore, Briggs King, Collins, Postles, Ramone, Shupe); No = 0; Absent = 4 (Reps. Heffernan, Smith, Hensley, Bush). The bill was released from committee with a F=4, M=7, U=0 vote.

Chair Williams then introduced **HB 129, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO EDUCATION**. She explained that the bill would require school-based wellness centers in high-needs elementary schools (criteria in bill). The state would pay for start-up costs at two schools per year until all identified schools have a center. If any high-needs secondary schools need wellness centers, the state will also help to fund those. Chair Williams also explained that the Delaware Department of Public Health is working on a strategic plan regarding the wellness centers. Dr. Jon Cooper, Director of Behavioral Health in the Colonial School District stated that the wellness centers in his district are vital and that the steering committee should release their plan by early June 2021.

The public comment period was opened, and Robert Overmiller voiced his support for the bill, as did Kyra Hoffner of the Delaware League of Women Voters, who stated that supplying medical care in high-needs schools can save money in the long run. Kristin Dwyer of the Delaware State Education Association (DSEA) indicated support of the bill because wellness centers can reduce student absenteeism. Jamie Clark of Nemours stated she supports this bill

because it addressed health equity and families' lack of funds and transportation. Sarah Bucic (DE PTA) gave her support because pilot programs have been successful; Pat Yancey (a nurse practitioner who works in school-based wellness centers with ChristianaCare) supports the bill because wellness centers address student health, which improves behavioral health, and helps families connect with other important services.

Christina Bryan (Delaware Health Care Association) and Dr. Tammy Croce (DASA) voiced their support, and Leah Woodall of Delaware Public Health indicated that the forthcoming strategic plan will address staffing, funding, and quality assessment. Ms. Woodall also indicated that there are town hall meetings scheduled to introduce the public to the wellness centers and allow for questions. Forrest Watson of the Colonial School District stated that his district already has five centers that have reduced behavior referrals and impacts of childhood trauma. Other members of the public who support this bill are Kendall Massett (DCSN), Dr. Julius Mullen, Dr. John Marinucci (DSBA), Dr. Brittany Hazzard, Superintendent Dorrell Green (RCCSD), Rachel Valentin (Charter School of New Castle), and Sarah Green

A motion was made by Rep. Moore and seconded by Rep. Ramone to release HB 129 from committee. The motion carried. Yes = 14 (Chair Williams, Vice Chair Chukwuocha, Reps. Bolden, Matthews, Kowalko, Lynn, Morrison, Osienski, Moore, Briggs King, Collins, Postles, Ramone, Shupe); No = 0; Absent = 4 (Reps. Heffernan, Smith, Hensley, Bush). The bill was released from committee with a F=2, M=9, U=0 vote.

Next, Chair Williams introduced **HB 133, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO EDUCATOR EVALUATIONS**. She explained that the bill aims to alter the Delaware Performance Appraisal System II (DPAS II) for teachers by shifting focus toward professional growth and student achievement. Chair Williams stated that the Delaware Department of Education (DDOE) and DSEA worked together on this bill, and that administrators would be required to engage in fewer observation areas. Rep. Collins stated that a definition of LEA (Local Education Association) was needed.

Chair Williams opened the floor to public comment. Robert Overmiller, Kendall Massett (DCSN), Dr. Tammy Croce (DASA), Dr. John Marinucci (DSBA), and Steven Washington all voiced support of HB 133.

A motion was made by Rep. Moore and seconded by Rep. Ramone to release HB 133 from committee. The motion carried. Yes = 14 (Chair Williams, Vice Chair Chukwuocha, Reps. Bolden, Matthews, Kowalko, Lynn, Morrison, Osienski, Moore, Briggs King, Collins, Postles, Ramone, Shupe); No = 0; Absent = 4 (Reps. Heffernan, Smith, Hensley, Bush). The bill was released from committee with a F=2, M=9, U=0 vote.

Chair Williams then introduced **HB 198, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO BLACK HISTORY EDUCATION**. Bill sponsor Rep. Dorsey Walker explained that this bill would require each public school district and charter school to implement infused Black history curriculum in grades K-12. Dr. Gant of DDOE indicated that they don't choose curriculum but support culturally responsive endeavors such as this one. Rep. Walker then introduced two students who helped write the bill, Tariah Hyland and Tyler Busch. Ms. Hyland, a high school student, stated that the requirements of this bill would make American history more truthful and transparent. Mr. Busch, a freshman history major at the University of Virginia and alumnus of Mount Pleasant High School in the Brandywine School District, stated that Black Americans are mostly invisible in current history classes and that this bill aims to correct the issue.

Rep. Kowalko indicated his support of the bill, stating that we must acknowledge and address racism to free ourselves from it and that Black achievements must be equally recognized. Rep. Morrison, a former educator, stated that Black Americans are grossly underrepresented in school curricula and that students of color are more engaged when education is more diverse and reflects their cultures. Rep. Osienski voiced his support, and Rep. Moore said that, as an educator and former Delaware public school student, she never learned Black history until she attended college at Delaware State University (DSU).

Rep. Chukwuocha gave his support for the bill's intent but argued that it isn't necessarily the responsibility of schools to teach Black history. He feels that it is the job of the Black community to educate each other, that Black organizations must preserve and pass on culture and heritage. Rep. Bolden voiced her support and reiterated that Black history is underrepresented in schools.

Chair Williams asked if teachers will be trained in the new curricula via professional development sessions, and Dr. Gant said they will be. Chair Williams asked if there is a timeline involved with this bill, and Dr. Gant replied there isn't because resources are being procured and a statewide rollout will take time.

Rep. Collins asked why this legislation should be implemented because he is concerned it will take more time away from students who have already lost educational time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rep. Dorsey Walker stated that this mandate would not detract from current educational goals because Black history would be infused into existing curricula. Rep. Collins then asked why the wording regarding protests and resistance exists in lines 28 and 29. Ms. Hyland stated that understanding past movements helps us understand our current situations. Rep. Collins then indicated that he would prefer if education stayed focused on the basics of education with no new additions.

Rep. Kowalko repeated his support of HB 198, and Rep. Smith questioned if legislators should be dictating curriculum to districts. Rep. Dorsey Walker reminded the committee that this bill includes much of the same language as last year's Holocaust education bill, which didn't receive nearly as much discussion. Chair Williams then responded to Rep. Smith, saying that she believes it is the job of legislators to remedy issues that lacking solutions. Rep. Bolden indicated her support because Black education is lacking, and Rep. Collins stated that implementing these curricula would be a large undertaking and it may not be possible to implement it.

Rep. Shupe asked why the Black history curricula "must" be implemented (as it states in the bill) instead of it being optional. Rep. Dorsey Walker responded it must be required so that districts and schools follow through. Mr. Busch stated that history needs to be told by everyone, not just one biased side. Ms. Hyland agreed that the wording needs to use "must" instead of "may." Rep. Matthews supports the bill and its efforts to comprehensively infuse Black history into existing curricula, but that some of the bill's language needs to be tweaked to be more efficient. Rep. Heffernan also gave her support.

With no more questions or comments from committee members, the floor was opened to public comment.

Hanifah Ouru-Sama, junior at Dover High School, is disappointed in her education system for not including more Black history and supports this bill

Dorrell Green (Superintendent, RCCSD) states his district is immersed in this work and supports the bill.

Adriana Bohm (RCCSD School Board member) and Ronald Handy, Sr. (Delaware NAACP) stated that Black history needs to be fully integrated into everyday K-12 education to show Black accomplishments.

Malinda Hudson and Shanon Vela stated that all children, and especially African American children need to be exposed to comprehensive Black history and accomplishments.

Rachelle Gayee (Mount Pleasant High School sophomore) is disappointed in the lack of Black history in her educational experience and supports the bill, as does Mya Brown.

Ikeisha Stuckey, Cliffvon Howell (DSU) stated that Black accomplishments are often ignored in the current education system and support this bill.

Asad Williams (senior at William Penn High School) stated that integrated Black history curricula can help combat stigmatism against the Black community and supports this bill.

Shannon Griffin (ACLU of Delaware) expressed support and believes Black accomplishments should be better represented and celebrated in our schools.

Kendall Scott (junior at Newark Charter School) and Jose Matthews (RCCSD School Board member) stated that Black students should have a chance to learn their history and see themselves reflected in it, and that Black History is American History and support this bill.

Dr. Taquil Foster Lewis and Dr. Brittany Hazzard (Impact Delaware) support the bill and stated that we must provide our students with a balanced and inclusive view on American History, and that quality of education will not be lost.

Faith Skinner (senior at Appoquinimink High School) and Makkaia Tatum-Islam (Delcastle Technical High School) support this bill and expressed disappointment in the current Delaware educational system.

Kellyn Williams (P.S. DuPont Middle School student) supports the bill and stated that her textbooks overwhelmingly leave out Black American achievements and history.

Akilah Alleyne (University of Delaware/ACLU) stated that data from her dissertation on Black history in schools support this bill, that Black history was systematically written out of curricula, and that Black students achieve higher levels when they see themselves reflected in their educational experience.

Margie Lopez Waite (Aspira) asked that other marginalized groups be included in the legislation.

Jalyn Powell (Out Loud LLC) supports the bill. Grace Reckner (Newark Charter School student), who also supports the bill, finished her classmate Mya Brown's statement from earlier, and stated that history should be inclusive of the Black community and its contributions.

Hollan Brockenbrough (junior at University of Delaware) stated that current curricula are not inclusive enough of Black history and supports the bill.

Rachel Valentin (CSNC) praised Ms. Hyland and Mr. Busch and all students who submitted public comment, supports the bill, and stated that modeling inclusion and equitable education should be mandated because it is vital for students of color.

Angela Williams concluded her daughter Kellyn's statement from earlier and stated her support for the bill.

Michelle Taylor (United Way of Delaware) supports the bill. Bradley Skelcher (DSU), who raised concerns about the lack of inclusion of the Delaware Juneteenth Association in the development of this bill.

Gerry Konzelmann supports the bill, as does Wali Rushdan, who stated that he is excited by this legislation.

Abdullah Muhammad supports what he says is a timely and important bill that helps Black students retain self-identity and better educates those who benefit from white privilege.

Julian Santiago (high school student) spoke in support of this bill.

Rev. Shanika Perry and her daughter Aniyah Lott spoke in support of this bill.

Sarah Green and Stephen Wilson (Brandywine School District teacher) support this bill and emphasize they feel it necessary that Black history must be equally represented in school curricula.

Imani Wulff-Cochrane supports this bill because students need to see themselves in their education, and Nancy Boyer echoed the same sentiments in her support of the bill.

Mike Matthews (RCCSD teacher) supports this bill and highlighted its importance for all students and its ability to help dismantle white culture supremacy.

Kassidy Parker supports the bill because history classrooms will become more inclusive spaces.

Daniel Walker (Chief of Staff, Wilmington City Council) expressed Council President Trippi Congo's support, and echoed that Black history is American history.

Rebecca Cotto (YWCA of Delaware) supports this bill and, as does Amanda Eric (senior at Caesar Rodney High School), who highlighted a white-washing of American history.

Michelle Classen (SAFE Schools Delaware) supports the bill, as does Hasana Parker, who spoke about the important Black history topics that are left out of current American history curricula.

Cami Seward supports the bill as a necessary step towards equity in education. Amy Gallagher also expressed her support and stated the state's racist and plantation history need to be dismantled by bills like this.

Kaylan Parker (senior at Dover High School) supports this bill and stated that this bill will ensure the prosperity of students who come after her.

Gary Hutt (African American Heritage Institute of Delaware) supports this bill, as does Sherese Brewington-Carr (The Links, Inc.). Charito Calvachi-Mateyko (Latino Initiative on Restorative Justice) expressed her support of the bill, stating that it will help heal trans-generational trauma of the Black community.

Robert Overmiller does not support this bill because he believes other minority groups should be included.

Members of the public who support the bill stated that representation in education matters and that Black history is American history. The supporters indicate that Black achievements have gone unrecognized for too long and that acknowledgement of Black contributions to America deserve to be included in school curricula. Many also stated that infusing Black history into current curricula will help to reduce the achievement gap experienced by Black students because they will be more engaged if their education reflects their culture and heritage. Lastly, it was noted that White students need to see the humanity in Black and Brown people in order to reduce racism, and that this bill is an important step in that direction.

A motion was made by Rep. Bolden and seconded by Rep. Moore to release HB 198 from committee. The motion carried. Yes = 14 (Chair Williams, Vice Chair Chukwuocha, Reps. Bolden, Matthews, Heffernan, Kowalko, Lynn, Morrison, Osienski, Bush, Moore, Ramone, Shupe, Smith); No = 2 (Postles, Collins); Absent = 2 (Reps. Hensley, Briggs King). The bill was released from committee with a F=6, M=4, U=0 vote.

Chair Williams asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Rep. Bolden made the motion which was seconded by Rep. Moore. The meeting was adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Speaker List

Ruth Lavelle

Robert Overmiller

Dr. Tammy Croce, Delaware Association of School Administrators (DASA)

Dr. John Marinucci, Delaware School Board Association (DSBA)

Steven Washington

Sarah Bucic, Delaware PTA

Jose Matthews, Red Clay Consolidated School District School Board member

Laird Stabler of the Delaware School Bus Contractors Association

Amy Gallagher

Kendall Massett, Delaware Charter School Association (DCSA)

Superintendent Dorrell Green, Red Clay Consolidated School District

Kyra Hoffner, Delaware League of Women Voters

Kristin Dwyer, Delaware State Education Association (DSEA)

Jamie Clark, Nemours/ A.I. DuPont Hospital for Children

Pat Yancey, nurse practitioner who works in school-based wellness centers with ChristianaCare

Christina Bryan, Delaware Health Care Association

Leah Woodall, Delaware Public Health

Forrest Watson, Colonial School District
Dr. Julius Mullen,
Dr. Brittany Hazzard
Rachel Valentin, Charter School of New Castle
Sarah Green
Hanifah Ouru-Sama
Adriana Bohm (RCCSD School Board member)
Ronald Handy, Sr. (Delaware NAACP)
Malinda Hudson
Shanon Vela
Cyndie Romer
Rachelle Gayee
Mya Brown
Ikeisha Stuckey
Cliffvon Howell (DSU)
Asad Williams
Shannon Griffin (ACLU of Delaware)
Kendall Scott
Dr. Taquil Foster Lewis
Dr. Brittany Hazzard
Faith Skinner
Makkaia Tatum-Islam
Kellyn Williams
Akilah Alleyne
Margie Lopez Waite
Jalyn Powell
Grace Reckner
Hollan Brockenbrough
Rachel Valentin (CSNC)
Angela Williams
Michelle Taylor (United Way of Delaware)
Bradley Skelcher
Gerry Konzelmann
Wali Rushdan
Abdullah Muhammad
Julian Santiago
Rev. Shanika Perry and her daughter Aniyah Lott
Sarah Green
Stephen Wilson
Imani Wulff-Cochrane
Nancy Boyer
Mike Matthews
Kassidy Parker
Daniel Walker
Rebecca Cotto (YWCA of Delaware)
Amanda Eric
Michelle Classen
Hasana Parker
Cami Seward
Kaylan Parker
Gary Hutt
Sherese Brewington-Carr
Charito Calvachi-Mateyko

Submitted Public Comment

Dear Honorable Legislators,

I sat in on your Education Committee meeting yesterday and hoped to make public comment on HB198. After a time, I thought it might be better to send you my words instead. I hope you will read and consider them.

It is shameful and outrageous that we are debating the importance of inclusive Black History in the year 2021. American History is the story of the native peoples who lived here, the story of the enslaved people who were brought here from Africa and the millions of immigrants of so many cultures who came here looking for freedom. How can our children know what it means to be an American if the stories of so many are not told. All subjects-from K-12 should comprise the stories and histories of all those who came here seeking freedom and-most importantly-all those who were here to begin with as well as those forced to come here as slaves. It is our messy, awful, authentic struggle to become a nation of truly free people. It is our story

Everyone of us comes from a family where the stories are not always pleasant and never perfect. So it is with our nation's story. None of us are perfect; no country is perfect. Truth and reconciliation and understanding are what we all need to aim for-in our personal stories and our public stories.

My own personal mission is to bring the Honorable John Lewis' story into the educational system. It is an American story that every American child should know.

Thank you,

Rhona Perkins, RN, Community Educator and Activist, Grandmother
302-415-2928

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment today. I am not a registered lobbyist and am speaking as an individual. But I am the co-chair of the Advocacy-Legislative Committee of the Southern Delaware Alliance for Racial Justice.

It is necessary that there be instruction in black history as part of all educational programming. We are long past the time when we can pat ourselves on the back for having February as black history month and checking off a box that we recognized that African American people are part of history.

In providing the required instruction of the Black History educational programming, HB198 also succinctly summarizes the gaps in American history and the need for this programming: the history and culture of Black people prior to the Diaspora, the significance of enslavement to the American economy, the relationship between white supremacy, racism, and American slavery, the central role racism played in the Civil War, how the tragedy of enslavement was perpetuated through segregation and federal, state, and local laws, the contributions of black people to American life, history, literature, economy, politics, and culture, the socioeconomic struggle black people endured and continue to endure in working to achieve fair treatment in the U.S., and black figures in national and Delaware history.

I urge the House Education Committee to vote HB198 out of committee and, ultimately, I urge the General Assembly to pass this bill.

I believe that this bill should be favorably considered to provide a year round curriculum in black history in our public schools.

--

Leslie L. Gladstone
Rehoboth Beach

Good evening,

Representative Sherry Dorsey Walker, thank you for House Bill No. 198 and for the opportunity to provide comments to this bill. This act to amend Title 14 of the Delaware Code relating to Black history education is very much needed and I am in full support. My comments are related to specific lines in the text. Please see below.

Line 4: I believe Black history education can begin in preschool. Research on brain development shows that birth to age five is when the greatest learning and growth occurs. Social and emotional development growth is key during these critical years as well. Teaching Black history at an early age provides the benefit to students who are black by teaching about black historical and current figures, begin to learn the true or the whole of American history, and move away from the white supremacist point of view and way of being. Non-black students, specifically white students, will have a fuller awareness and learn actual American history as opposed to the one-way view that is provided at such an early age through all grade levels. Finally, this will provide an opportunity for white school teachers, white administrators, white resource officers, and white staff an opportunity to learn and teach not only the true American history but to be open to black culture. After all, we know that suspension and expulsion disparity rates for black and white students begin in preschool.

Line 10: Please consider adding technology and math.

Line 27: Please ensure that the trauma-responsive care is culturally appropriate.

Let me know if you have any questions.

Respectfully,
Tony Ruggiero
89 Peach Blossom Lane
Camden, DE 19934

Honorable Education Committee, Representative Dorsey Walker,
I didn't have a chance to speak during public comments but here is my contribution to this bill.
Thanks to the committee but especially, to representative Dorsey Walker, sponsors, students, and stakeholders bringing this bill to the table for acting on values and core principles so today we have this historic legislation in front of us.

My name is Erika Gutierrez, representing DelawareCAN, where our primary goal is to empower parents, students, and everyday Delawareans to advocate for transparency and access to high-quality education for every student in Delaware, and that includes LEARNING FROM THE TRUTH

This well overdue step towards honest justice in education is finally here in Delaware to balance the high cost that dismissing facts of entire cultures and identities have done to our society and most importantly to our humanity. History has to be transparent in order to move us forward and on a healing path to an overdue transparent present. In DelawareCAN,, we feel strong and proud about this legislation finally being put on the table and bringing an honest reality. We also feel grateful and proud of our Youth Advocacy Council students such as Tariah Hyland who have been a key part of this movement.

We cherish their bravery and determination of putting their voices to work and into action by asking legislators, inquiring at their schools, with their teachers and superintendents about this necessary change. They are feeling their power of advocating for the right to learn from our black history legacy that has until now been almost nonexistent in public education curriculums.

We support Bill 198

There is more to do and include from all the cultures of the world that are a vital part of this country and this is a great beginning. This is positive, healing, and fair. It is good to feel that there will be no more hiding, no more

deceiving of historical facts that have contributed exponentially to the dehumanization of our communities. This bill can bring our students a balanced context that while complex, it brings magnificence due to the black and diverse contributions that have been core to the development of our society in every area. Thanks to this bill our students in DE can have the opportunity to understand the complexities of this country, and to start figuring out their needed conscious role as key actors of their present and future. With a healthy identity built out of truth. Legislators, be ethical and contribute to a unified ecosystem so we build back better.

Best Regards,
Erika Gutierrez
Outreach and Strategic Partnerships Coordinator
Delaware Campaign for Achievement Now

Good Afternoon. My name is Dr. Mary Schorse. I am a geography educator and I work with teachers across the state helping them understand the discipline of geography so that they are better able to teach geography. I would like to point out that, For well over a decade, Delaware has had in place state level standards for K-12 social studies instruction. These standards require students to learn key concepts critical to their being able to understand the world we live in but even with standards and supporting curriculum students still have limited knowledge of the key concepts for any of the four social studies strands.

I bring this background to the comments I would like to make on HB 198. This bill very effectively draws attention to the fact that K-12 curriculum in DE and elsewhere has not included the diversity of perspectives and experiences of the many populations who comprise our society. As a society we are becoming increasingly aware of the host of unintended consequences that have resulted from decades of an historically biased curriculum. This failure to provide an inclusive curriculum absolutely needs to be addressed.

I am concerned that the bill as it is written may not achieve the desired results of the bill which I understand to be increased student knowledge of Black history globally and in the US, followed by a critical understanding of how those histories have shaped the world we live in today. I whole heartedly support this intent.

I worry, however, that leaving the incredibly important task of diversifying curriculum to districts and not assigning it to the State Department of Education (as was the approach of HB 318 which addresses Holocaust Education) will create a broad spectrum of curriculum which could vary significantly in content and quality from district to district. Even with state mandated standards for geography, and the availability of recommended curriculum, what I see taught as geography varies dramatically from teacher to teacher, district to district.

I don't know if diversity and cultural sensitivity standards are the correct way to go, but there are similarities in the goals of increased insight and sensitivity that HB198 shares with HB 318, and there are potentially more cultural experiences that students would benefit from learning about.

HB 198 bill very wisely addresses the need for teacher professional development which is perhaps the most critical element to ensuring that a more diverse curriculum is effectively implemented. I know when teachers are not comfortable with certain elements of the recommended geography curriculum, they are not motivated to teach it with the spirit required.

I close by stressing that I fully endorse the intent of this bill, I thank Rep Dorsey Walker for addressing an important equity issue through legislation, and her dedicated team of students led by Rep Moore for drafting HB 198, however, I think the language of the bill needs to more accurately reflect what Dr. Gant has articulated as already underway - development of a culturally infused K-12 curriculum spearheaded and curated by DOE - and not individual districts.

Thank you.

My name is Dr. David Young, Executive Director of the Delaware Historical Society, an independent non-profit collecting and making public Delaware history since 1864.

I want to thank Chairwoman Rep. Miller and the honorable members of the House Education Committee, and esp. Rep. Dorsey Walker for this legislation, HB 198, which my organization supports in concept. It requires the teaching of Black history in Delaware schools which is highly important and something we do every day—in history there is understanding.

Delaware Historical Society works closely with Delaware schools and curriculum officers in the schools by providing teacher training, educator resource packets, including primary documents from our collection of 3 million documents and artifacts. My organization runs the Mitchell Center for African American Heritage, which welcomes students and teachers and the public to its numerous exhibitions and programs, spanning five centuries all the way up to recent history. Delaware Historical Society also publishes the *Delaware History Journal* which regularly publishes scholarship on African American history; it has been the scholarly publication of record since 1946. The most recent March 2021 issue includes articles about Delaware's African American suffragists. We will be honoring Dr. Velma Scantlebury with our History Makers Award this year on October 7.

Delaware Historical Society also runs National History Day for the entire state, involving junior high and high school students—we are a significant asset for history education for superintendents, curriculum supervisors as well as teachers and students. This includes field trips, virtual programs, and our leadership in organizing National History Day. DHS serves tens of thousands of Delaware students each year.

Effective public history will serve the cause of social and racial justice. While we support House Bill 198, we ask that DHS and specifically the Mitchell Center for African American Heritage—now five years old-- be included explicitly as resources because we work to preserve and present African American history on a daily basis.

Please pass this bill and my organization will work with you to bring life to history in meaningful ways.

Thank you.

Good afternoon Chairperson Williams and honorable members of the House Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 129. My name is Jamie Clarke and I am the Chief Value Officer for Nemours Children's Health System in the Delaware Valley.

Nemours supports school-based wellness centers as a critical opportunity to increase access to health care services for children and families. We know this to be an important cornerstone for addressing health equity—further removing obstacles and barriers such as time or transportation—to bring needed services directly to the neighborhoods where children learn and spend a good portion of their day.

Decades of research indicate that school-based health is a responsive model to address the myriad of physical, emotional and behavioral health needs of children and adolescents. Specifically for younger, elementary-aged children, school wellness centers have improved access to care, particularly for our most vulnerable children. For those children with a chronic condition such as asthma, school wellness centers have been shown to assist with better management of their illness, reduction in the number of school days missed, and reduction in emergency department visits and related hospitalizations.^{1,2}

We are at a time when all children and families increasingly need access to health care. When returning to physical school environments in the upcoming months, children will desperately need access to an array of comprehensive health services in order to process, heal, receive preventive and deferred medical care, and be best positioned for academic, social, and emotional success.

Multidisciplinary teams of providers who understand childhood trauma can address these immediate needs as children return to in-class learning. Providers can deliver assessments and evaluations for intervention services, work with family doctors to monitor chronic illness, and help families manage and address on-going and basic needs.

I would like to thank Representative Williams for leadership on this issue as well as thank Representatives Bolden and Morrison for co-sponsorship of the bill. Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to express our support for HB 129.

Thank you for hearing my comments in support of HB198, which would require school districts to establish year round curriculum in black history. I write to you as a white parent of a white child. It is a deep value in our family to raise our son to journey through life striving for a personal and communal embodiment of anti-racist beliefs, attitudes, and actions, thereby subverting the violent and toxic effects of white supremacy on all people. One critical piece of our son's education with the public school setting, then, will be for him to have full instruction in black history as our American history. We cannot address or heal from that we do not know, remember or acknowledge. My child, and every of child, needs to know the truth of our history and that begins with having year-round instruction in black history as well as the honest telling of American history as the story of race and white supremacy. Please vote in support of HB198.

Thank you!

Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe

Pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Rehoboth Beach, DE

Home address:

17436 Slipper Shell Way, Unit 13

Lewes, DE 19958

Good afternoon,

I want to voice my strong support of HB198. As the mother of 2 elementary school children, and the product of a Delaware education, I am constantly reminded how lacking our education has been in black history. It is long past due that we reckon with our past and stop the white washing of history ever present in our school books and public discourses. We need so much more than a few profiles showcased during Black History month. Burying the truth of our past can not continue. Please support this bill and give our children the comprehensive history education they deserve.

Sincerely,

Jessica Turner

Milford, DE

My name is Bradley Skelcher. I am a member of Delaware Juneteenth Association and Professor Emeritus of History at Delaware State University and member of the Delaware Heritage Commission. I come to you today, however, to speak on behalf of the Delaware Juneteenth Association to point out an oversight in HB Bill No 198 in that Delaware Juneteenth Association was not included. Beginning on line 36 of the document draft. Read the document:

Delaware Juneteenth Association was not included in the list of organizations to be consulted by the Department of Education in developing the African American history curriculum. The Delaware Juneteenth Association is a statewide community based organization to advance historical, cultural, educational, social, self-esteem building and knowledge. This is accomplished through children and family oriented educational programs.

Thus, we ask to be included as one of the organizations to be consulted by the department of Education.

Thank you

Bradley Skelcher, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus
Delaware State University

Why wouldn't black history be a part of the state curriculum when it is such a significant part of U.S. History?

How can one teach a balanced view of U.S. History without thoroughly exploring the contributions and impact that all of the varied communities and cultures have had in its development and existence?

Dr. Taquil Foster

I strongly support this bill. It recognizes a great gap in education about American history. It also appropriately leaves discretion to schools and teachers to design the specifics of their curriculum.

Thank you,

Dr. Jennie Keith

9 Massachusetts Ave

Lewes DE

I AM CHARLOTTE KING, CHAIRPERSON OF THE SOUTHERN DELAWARE ALLIANCE FOR RACIAL JUSTICE, AND I AM HERE TODAY TO TESTIFY IN SUPPORT OF HB198 , WHICH SEEKS TO MANDATE THE INTEGRATION OF BLACK HISTORY INTO THE CURRICULUM IN ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS, INCLUDING CHARTER SCHOOLS IN DELAWARE. IT IS IRONIC THAT WE HAVE TO MANDATE THE INCLUSION OF BLACK HISTORY INTO CURRENT CURRICULUM, GIVEN THAT BLACK HISTORY IS AMERICAN HISTORY. THOUGH THERE IS MUCH SHAME IN THIS HISTORY, THERE IS MUCH TO BE PROUD OF. THE ECONOMIC WEALTH AND POWER OF THIS COUNTRY WAS BUILT ON THE BACKS OF THE AFRICAN SLAVE ANCESTORS OF BLACK AMERICA, THROUGH THE CRUEL EXPLOITATION OF CONVICT LABOR, AND THE ONGOING DENIAL OF THE TREMENDOUS SACRIFICES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF GENERATIONS OF BLACK AMERICANS. WE KNOW THAT REDEMPTION FOR THESE ORIGINAL SINS AND THE HEALING OF THIS COUNTRY IS DEPENDENT ON

ADMITTING TO AND ADDRESSING THIS SHAMEFUL HISTORY. WE KNOW THAT BY DENYING OR HIDING THIS HISTORY WE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES OF THE PRESENT, NOR KNOW HOW TO PLAN FOR THE FUTURE. JOHN F. KENNEDY IS QUOTED AS SAYING, "THE GOAL OF EDUCATION IS THE ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE DISSEMINATION OF TRUTH".. WE KNOW FROM THE RECENT TEACHING INCIDENT IN THE CEASAR RODNEY SCHOOL DISTRICT, THAT EDUCATORS HAVE FAILED IN THEIR OBLIGATION TO SHARE TRUTH AND KNOWLEDGE TO YOUNG IMPRESSIONABLE MINDS. IN THIS INCIDENT KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH WAS REPLACED WITH FICTION AND HEALTH FITNESS ROUTINES. CAN WE SPEAK WITH PRIDE ABOUT THE EDUCATION OF OUR CHILDREN, IF WE HAVE DENIED THEM TRUTH AND ENLIGHTENMENT?

THOUGH MANY GOVERNMENTAL BODIES THROUGHOUT THE NATION REFUSE TO CONTROL THE EXPANSION OF WEAPONS OF DESTRUCTION IN OUR COMMUNITIES, AND OFTEN IN OUR SCHOOLS, THEY HAVE RESISTED THE GROWTH AND EXPANSION OF OUR GREATEST WEAPON FOR SURVIVAL, TRANSPARENT AND TRUTHFUL EDUCATION. NELSON MANDELA IS

QUOTED AS SAYING, "EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL WEAPON WHICH YOU CAN USE TO CHANGE THE WORLD. LET US GIVE THIS WEAPON TO ALL OF OUR CHILDREN. IT IS MORE VALUABLE AND CHEAPER THAN GUNS.

WHILE WE SUPPORT HB 198, WE ARE CONCERNED THAT IT DOES NOT ADDRESS ACCOUNTABILITY AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE TO THE MANDATE.

SOME HAVE ALREADY EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE LACK OF FUNDING NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION. I FAIL TO UNDERSTAND HOW THIS IS AN ISSUE GIVEN THAT THE HISTORY IS ALREADY WRITTEN AND AVAILABLE IN INNUMERABLE RESOURCES. AN OLD AFRICAN PROVERB SAYS, "IF YOU THINK EDUCATION IS EXPENSIVE, TRY IGNORANCE."

HB 198 is a pivotal "start" towards the resolution of a longstanding problem, ergo correcting the "invisible" status of Black Contributions to the History of Delaware and this Nation. There is not one facet of this States' History that is without the input of African Americans who landed at Olde Swedes Landing...and were enslaved to ensure the growth and building of this "corner of the "almost" United States of America. This deliberate effort to diminish the humanity and visibility of African Americans has been and continues to be the "OTHER" pandemic virus.. there is COVVID 19 for which now there is a VACCINE. On the other hand..there is COVVID 1619 (Af. American' yr. of landing) for which there has yet to be a VACCINE. H.B. 198 could well be the start of a "researched-corrective and truth-recognition vaccine" for COVVID 1619. Thank you for this much needed " Starting Effort."

Bebe Coker,
Black Heritage Educ.Theater Group
Wilmington, De.

Dear Members of the House Education Committee,

Will there be an update in the HB198 to the list of places, groups, and resources where students and teachers can learn about African American history, particularly in Delaware?

The language of the bill includes assumptions made about what everyone does and the degree to which they'd actually work together.

Can you include as a resource the Delaware Historical Society and the Mitchell Center for African American Heritage because we offer teacher resources, field trips, and primary sources about African American history from the 1630s through to the present day—both in person, at schools, and on digital platforms?

Thank you for your consideration.

David Young

How can we teach Inclusive History?
Rhona Perkins
Rhonalev@yahoo.com

The reason why I believe it's important to teach Black history and honest Black history mind you, is because BLACK history is AMERICA'S history. It is important from even the youngest age, to learn of the African-American contribution to American society and development as a whole, from the arts to The sciences to every area of human endeavor.

Children of all races need to learn the African-American contribution to innovation such as heart transplant, surgery, plasma development, the filament that went into incandescent light bulbs to help them burn longer, our traffic light

systems, the design of Washington DC, the development of 3D technology, not to mention our accomplishments in Aerospace industry, Military and the engineering that goes into the very vehicles we drive today.

When people of ALL races see these contributions with regard to African-Americans, they change their perceived biases that they've learned in their homes. At the very MINIMUM they walk away with a forced dual perspective.

These things in turn create more TOLERANCE throughout our society and our three branches of government, but most importantly from a SAFETY perspective, LAW ENFORCEMENT. Now these would be, future police officers having had benefit of taught knowledge of black history, MUST see African Americans as PEOPLE and not as someone they biasedly perceive as a second class citizen.

Black history taught in our schools also prevent hate crimes. Case in point: My boss who is quite an accomplished lady with several degrees, several leadership positions and whose counsel is sought after in a variety of topics, was walking through her posh suburban New Jersey neighborhood 2 weeks ago. While out for a walk, two teenagers aged 17 and 19 happened upon her, threw debris at her out of their car window and said to her "GET OFF THE ROAD N-WORD!!"

They did not see this 52 year old innocent Graduate of Morgan State University and member of Delta Sigma Theta as someone's Mother, someone's Wife and someone's Daughter, with BOTH of her children are in college on academic scholarships. Because her family has quite a relationship with the Police Department in their neighborhood, the Police made it their business to find the two young men and arrested them on hate crimes. She declined pressing hate crimes charges with the caveat that she has the opportunity to sit down with these two young men face to face and educate them on how we as Nation got to the divisive place where we find ourselves in the United States today.

She left those young men extremely apologetic with tears welling down their faces, ashamed of what they had done and even they volunteered that they were entitled to SOME kind of punishment.

They benefited from this very BRIEF lesson in Black history, right then and there in the Police Station. Imagine the bending of the Arc of the perspective of those young men, if Black History was taught in their schools.

I urge the UNANIMOUS and BIPARTISAN passage of this bill. This is the FIRST State. You're only FIRST because you dare to LEAD. You can place this commentary in the record.

Warm Regards,

John Robinson, MBA

The Honorable Sherry Dorsey Walker
Delaware House of Representatives
411 Legislative Ave.
Dover, DE 19901

March 31, 2021

RE: HB 198, AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 14 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO BLACK HISTORY EDUCATION.

Dear Representative Sherry Dorsey Walker:

The National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc. - Delaware Chapter (NC100BW-DE) advocates on behalf of Black women and girls through national and local actions and strategic alliances that promote leadership development and gender equity in the areas of health, education and economic empowerment.

Black history education is not only a fairness issue, but it is imperative that Black History be included in the curriculum. It is important for all students to know the role that Black people played in developing our great nation, as well as understand how we have been treated unequally over the years. Specifically, this curriculum will bring to the forefront the contributions of Black women and girls to America which will help increase the self-esteem of young Black girls and encourage them to live their dreams to make an impact on society and the world.

This bill defines and holds our school systems accountable for what is being taught to our children in grades K-12, with regards to Black History. This curriculum is also inclusive of past history, as well as contemporary issues that plague our society, which will help to teach the students how to live in a pluralistic society. The passage of this Bill will help advance equality and inclusion, as well as the truth about who we are as a nation and who this nation consists of collectively. NC100BW-DE fully supports HB 198 and recognizes the significance of this policy for ALL students in Delaware.

Should any additional information be needed, I may be reach via e-mail at ncbwofdelaware@outlook.com or by telephone at 302-467-1487.

Sincerely,

Melanie Daniels, President National Coalition of 100 Black Women Inc. Delaware Chapter

Respectfully submitted by Val Gould, Legislative Fellow