



THE FAIRFAX COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

8115 Gatehouse Road, Suite 5400, Falls Church, VA 22042

Fairfax County
Public Schools

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February 21, 2023

The Honorable Glenn A. Youngkin
Governor of Virginia
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

The Honorable Aimee R. Guidera
Secretary of Education
P.O. Box 1475
Richmond, VA 23218

Dear Governor Youngkin and Secretary Guidera:

We write to express our concern over the administration's decision to single out Advanced Placement (AP) African-American Studies for review. This action, coupled with last year's cancellation of Virginia's Black History Month Historical Markers contest for students, and your administration's upcoming changes to Virginia's History and Social Studies Standards of Learning (SOL), establish an alarming pattern of disregard for the academic needs of the Commonwealth's students.

The AP African-American Studies course "draws from a variety of fields – history, literature, the arts, geography, science – to explore the vital contributions and experiences of African Americans," according to the College Board. The course allows for robust discussion and debate within the classroom and gives students an opportunity to pursue independent research. Over 300 educators contributed to this course's development. These educators, professionals in curriculum development and history, bring unparalleled expertise to the table.

As the entry point for the first enslaved Africans in the colonies and home to the nation's first Black governor, Virginia has been the backdrop for vital pieces of African-American history. We have a moral obligation to teach our students about both the darkest times from our past and the inspiring progress we have made as a country. The AP African-American Studies course offers this important objective in a way that also provides our students with valuable college credit. We should applaud and support our students' desire to pursue rigorous curriculum offerings, not deny them these opportunities.

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Black History must merit more than an honorable mention every February. We must expand our study of the past and present, not restrict it. As elected School Board members who believe diversity is one of Virginia's greatest strengths, we urge you not to impede the teaching of AP African-American Studies.

Sincerely,



Stella Pekarsky
Sully District Representative
Fairfax County School Board



Rachna Sizemore Heizer
Chair & Member At Large
Fairfax County School Board



Laura Jane Cohen
Springfield District Representative
Fairfax County School Board



Melanie K. Meren
Hunter Mill Representative
Fairfax County School Board



Karl Frisch
Providence District Representative
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