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Southern Poverty Law Center
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The Honorable Jim Jordan
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
Washington DC 20515

June 24, 2026

Dear Chairman Jordan and Ranking Member Raskin,

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and the 50 undersigned education rights organizations, we write to remind you that the U.S. Supreme Court, the Department of Education, and Congress itself have set standards and affirmed the importance of the federal government's role in ensuring that schools are free from discrimination.¹ In the face of hate-filled, divisive messages in all forms of media, and organized anti-inclusion efforts by third parties, it is crucial that schools implement policies and practices that ensure safe, healthy, and inclusive school environments for all students.

While resources and interventions should focus on schools and students who need it most, every educational system must act in the best interests of their whole student body and community. The health of our nation is harmed when schools fail to facilitate honest and nuanced discussions about the historical connections between race and white supremacist ideologies.

In 2014, the number of Latino, African-American, and Asian students surpassed the number of white students in U.S. schools.² By 2019, more than half of the nation's population under age 16 identified as a racial or ethnic minority.³ To prepare and empower our nation's young people to navigate diversity in and out of the classroom, it is necessary that schools establish inclusive curriculums that honestly reflect the nuances of our nation's history and the realities of those who live here. Inclusive classrooms provide "academic benefits such as

¹ See: Brown v. Board of Education (1954); Lau v. Nichols (1974); Plyler v. Doe (1982); Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; Age Discrimination Act of 1975

² <https://drexel.edu/soe/resources/student-teaching/advice/importance-of-cultural-diversity-in-classroom/>

³ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/new-census-data-shows-the-nation-is-diversifying-even-faster-than-predicted/>

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improved critical thinking,⁴ and higher overall achievement levels for both majority and minority group members.”^{5,6}

Students of color, Native American students, students with disabilities, LGBTQ youth, and religious minorities are most at risk when a school system fails to provide an inclusive learning environment or selectively removes diverse perspectives from the curriculum. “Cultivating dialogue, engaging with facts and protecting students’ right to learn are essential components in strategies for prevention, intervention and response to hate and bias.”⁷ It is crucial that schools are able to provide meaningful instruction which encourage all students’ cultural awareness, enhances each student’s sense of identity, and fosters inclusion in the classroom community.⁸ Anti-racist education which addresses racism and other forms of bias should be a core component of this instruction. By acknowledging cultural and social differences within the student body and creating a safe space for discussion, schools are giving students tools to interact with people different from them “in a respectful, mature way that is essential for success in life outside the classroom.”⁹ Implementing programs or policies to improve school climate and ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students requires that all school staff receive evidence-based, culturally responsive training and other professional development.¹⁰

When organized efforts by third parties to remove honest discussions about actual or perceived race, color, national origin, disability, religion, or sex, including sexual orientation and gender identity, interfere with the ability of students to receive a truthful and inclusive education, the damage goes far beyond the individual students or the educational material being targeted. The direct, immediate harm is upon the student body, while the community suffers indirect and lingering harm. Schools attempting to avoid confrontation by voluntarily removing diversity-centered curriculum are not providing protected learning environments; instead, they are complicit in harming their students and communities.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) and Learning for Justice (LFJ), its education program, have made vital contributions to efforts to develop and maintain truthful and inclusive education that benefits all students and their communities. LFJ has long made valuable, well-researched educational materials on a wide variety of subjects available for educators’ use. The SPLC has been at the forefront of legal actions opposing laws and policies that impose grossly overreaching censorship of diverse and inclusive books, curricula, and discussion, which put students and educators alike at risk.

In order to educate the next generation, strengthen our country, and live up to our ideals, all schools should be a safe environment for learning and critical analysis. Hate and discrimination should have no home or foothold in our public education systems. Congress must speak up for the value of inclusive education, which provides students with “intellectual tools for reflection, continuous inquiry, constructive

⁴ Bowman, N. A. (2010). College diversity experiences and cognitive development: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 80, 4-33. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654309352495>

⁵ Elicker, J. D., Snell, A. F., & O'Malley, A. L. (2009). Do student perceptions of diversity emphasis relate to perceived learning of psychology? *Teaching of Psychology*, 37, 36-40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00986280903425706>

⁶ <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psychology-teacher-network/introductory-psychology/benefits-of-diversity>

⁷ <https://www.splcenter.org/learning-for-justice/resisting-hate-in-education/>

⁸ <https://drexel.edu/soe/resources/student-teaching/advice/importance-of-cultural-diversity-in-classroom/>

⁹ <https://drexel.edu/soe/resources/student-teaching/advice/importance-of-cultural-diversity-in-classroom/>

¹⁰ https://civilrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Civil-Rights-Principles-for-Safe-Healthy-and-Inclusive-School-Climates_2.pdf

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dialogue, and the possibility of changing one's perspective"¹¹—tools which are necessary to help them to become better citizens. It is crucial that conversations also consider the contributions and insights of organizations, such as SPLC and LFJ, that support and defend that education.

Sincerely,

AFCP 4129
AFT
AFT 2121
AFT Guild, Local 1931
AFT Local 6258
AFT New Jersey
AFT Vermont
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families
Arkansas Education Association
Autism Life Care Center
AWACE LIFE CARE CENTER
California Federation of Teachers
California Teachers Association
City College of San Francisco
Colorado Education Association
Connecticut Education Association
Education Minnesota
Education West Virginia
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality California
Equality Ohio
Illinois Education Association
ISEA
Lawndale Federation of Classified Employees
Maine Education Association
Maryland State Education Association
Massachusetts Teachers Association
Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition
Missouri NEA
NAACP-Arkansas State Conference
National Council of Jewish Women
National Council of Jewish Women Arizona
National Education Association
National Education Association of New Mexico
National Women's Law Center
Novato Federation of Teachers - Local 1986

¹¹ <https://www.splcenter.org/learning-for-justice/education-justice/>

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Oregon Education Association
PFLAG Frederick
PFLAG Sacramento
San Rafael Federation of Teachers
Serving at risk families everywhere, Inc.
Silver State Equality
Texas AFT
Texas State Teachers Association / National Education Association
The Advocacy Institute
Tucson Jewish Museum & Holocaust Center
Utah Education Association
Vermont-NEA
Wisconsin Education Association Council