



April 11, 2022

Office of the Colorado Board of Education
201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

Members of the Colorado State Board of Education:

I am writing today to express my deep concern about the recent updates to the Social Studies Standards intended for review at the upcoming April 12, 2022 Colorado State Board of Education meeting. The April 12th agenda currently uploaded on [Board Docs](#) lists item 8, *Student Learning*, “Standards Revision Update: Overview of Public Feedback on Draft Social Studies Standards.” Specifically, I need to address the Review Committee’s response to public feedback as quoted: contents of slide 17 of the presentation attached titled “Social Studies Standards Review Presentation April 2022,” – namely:

Theme from Public Feedback: Numerous concerns were raised about the age appropriateness of referencing LGBTQ in lower grades.

Committee General Response: The committee removed all references to LGBTQ below 4th grade.¹

One Colorado partnered with Representative Gonzales-Gutierrez, Representative Buentello, and Senator Gonzales to pass [HB19-1192](#) to ensure the inclusion of the history, culture, and social contributions of racial and ethnic minorities, religious minorities, and the LGBTQ individuals within these minority groups in public school curriculum. When students learn about leaders who reflect their own identities, they feel supported and affirmed, and when students learn about leaders whose identities differ from their own, we hope it will spark empathy and understanding. It is precisely those values that will help combat the increasingly overt acts of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and xenophobia seen in our society today.

It is clear from the public comments gathered by this committee, that Colorado is not immune to the current national rhetoric surrounding the LGBTQ community, specifically ideas regarding the “age-appropriateness” of introducing, speaking, or teaching about the LGBTQ community to children and youth. We absolutely agree that there are age-appropriate indicators, strategies, modes of communication and learning within each grade-level. However, it is troubling to suggest that it is not possible to incorporate LGBTQ history—the people, places, and events—into the existing curriculum prior to 4th grade. The crux of this matter is distorted beliefs stemming from historic, ongoing national discriminatory rhetoric about who LGBTQ people are, what our history stands for, and the kind of world we are working together to create.

Every human contains a multitude of identities—including a gender identity and a sexual orientation. Whether someone identifies as straight, cisgender, bisexual, non-binary, or transgender, these are all equally valid sexual orientations and gender identities. Logically, *if* the presupposition is that teaching about the LGBTQ community inherently incorporates sexual orientation and gender identity—which it does not and should not need to—and this Board and Review Committee determines that LGBTQ social studies curriculum is developmentally-inappropriate until 4th grade, *then* any social studies curriculum relating to any and all gender identities and sexual orientations should be deemed developmentally-inappropriate until that 4th grade-level. Put simply, if children are deemed too young to learn about lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer people and relationships, they are too young to learn about

¹ p17, “Social Studies Standards Review Presentation April 2022” & “Social Studies Themes and Responses” Colorado Board of Education Board Docs. Accessed April 7, 2022.

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heterosexual or cisgender people and relationships. With this in mind, we are asking this board to restore all references to the LGBTQ community in Colorado social studies curriculum below 4th grade, contrary to the recommendation of the Social Studies Standards Review Committee.

When anti-LGBTQ rhetoric repackaged from the time of Anita Bryant in the 1970's is permeating our national discourse, and Florida, Texas, and Alabama are passing bills to censor discussions of the LGBTQ community in schools and criminalize parents for supporting their transgender kids, Colorado should stand as a leader against this discrimination. It is the State Board of Education and this Review Committee's mandated obligation to take actions that will benefit all students to the betterment of our present *and* future society. I ask you to resolve steadfast in the intention and purpose of HB19-1192 to establish the inclusion of LGBTQ history in public school curriculum in a manner that inspires clear, creative, inspiring, empathetic, and developmentally-accurate classroom instruction which benefits all students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nadine Bridges', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nadine Bridges, MSW
One Colorado Executive Director

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