

Presented to the House Education Committee

Statements in Support of Bill H.794 compiled by the Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools

March 29, 2018

*Respondents were asked to sign if they supported the bill and answer the prompt:
I support H.794 because...*

Jordan Quiles Barre

Representation of our marginalized identities matters, both among our students and the history they learn. We cannot create a just and equitable society for all without first recognizing how deep injustice and oppression runs.

Addie Mahdavi Newfane

I went through the Vermont public school system and I didn't learn that Vermont had a eugenics program until college. I never knew the histories of Black and indigenous Vermonters until I took it upon myself to learn, and that has made me completely question everything else I was taught. Just because people think Vermont is a state full of white liberals does not mean that indigenous/people of color do not also have rich histories in and outside the state that are critical for Vermont's students to know. Inequitable relationships of power are coded into our school systems and if we want this place to be as inclusive, accessible and equitable as it purports to be, we need to make concrete steps toward that reality through our educational system.

Zmira Stouber Burlington

Having ethnic studies taught at an earlier age will be a tremendous help towards the future.

Rory Decker Burlington

Representation and diversity are incredibly important for children of all ages.

Alice Matthews Burlington

A state like Vermont, which is predominantly white, would benefit immensely from the critical inclusion of ethnic studies. It is important to educate people who are largely removed from more diverse places so that internalized prejudices and systematic oppression can be dismantled.

Courtney Smith Burlington

Educating children about ethnic diversity from a young age can only help to demolish the racist institutions currently in place!!

Kunal Palawat *Burlington*

I think every person residing in Vermont should know the story of the land and the indigenous peoples who lived/live here. History should not be hidden!

Meredith Roberts *Burlington*

Diversity is one of the single most important aspects of learning and education. The more people who take diversity for granted, the better off our state and country will be. There is so much to learn from ethnic studies that enhance life and create peace. K-12 education is a vital time to promote these values.

Eliza R Russ *Burlington*

As a Vermonter, I wish I received this education. It is important for children in a predominantly white state to engage in ethnic studies.

Kerry Fantelli *South Burlington*

It is vital for this very white and biased community to become aware and hopefully competent in regards to cross-cultural understandings. Decrease the macro and micro aggressions that constantly occur in the schools and higher education.

Shreya Kontham *Burlington*

Yes.

Haley Buffum *Jamaica*

It's very important.

Lila Hewett *Burlington*

Because ethnic studies is relevant to EVERYONE.

Claire Dumont *Burlington*

Racism is learned, not innate. If differences are celebrated and the histories of racism in the US are taught from a young age. Detrimental beliefs are less likely to persist into adulthood.

Rachel Foster *Burlington*

I believe children need to have education based in diversity and inclusivity, so that they develop a holistic and multifaceted perspective of our society. Why wait to teach these things until college? The key to decreasing discrimination is to introduce important diverse topics to young kids, before they begin internalizing problematic racial stereotypes.

Allison O'Connor *Burlington*

Children need a more holistic education.

Kirsten Jensen *Burlington*

Having comprehensive and inclusive education, especially for young kids, is imperative to creating an informed and just society.

Shaya Ginsberg *Burlington*

In one of the whitest states in America, it's important to (a) make sure our youth understand that not everyone is white, and (b) show students of color that we see them and they matter.

Nicholas Lewis *Burlington*

education about and exposure to ideas and cultures beyond our own is the key to building a more peaceful society.

Maria Kerchner *Burlington*

It is important for Vermont youth to get a comprehensive and honest education.

Colleen Proulx *Burlington*

I support ethnic studies in VT because I think that the more we know about who is living here, the more we can teach future generations about the history and all-encompassing culture of Vermont and where we come from. It's so important!!

James H. Payne *Burlington*

Ethnic studies open kids' eyes beyond their own experience, and give them a lens to appreciate and see the world through different lives and cultures, as well as sympathize with people who are separated from them unfairly. This bill will help to teach kids what it's like to be a good human, and a good Vermonter.

Charlotte Slome *Burlington*

Yes.

Sarah Boatner *Burlington*

We shouldn't censor our children's education!

Sonya Buglion Gluck *Burlington*

I grew up in Hyde Park Vermont and was totally unprepared to engage in anti-racist work as a white person. I never learned anything about racism in high school except a brief unit on the Civil Rights Movement and I think that is shameful. Vermont needs to educate it's young people in order to address the racial injustices across the state. Uneducated youth are complacent youth and complacency cannot be afforded when it comes to power, privilege and oppression. We must rise up together to demand that all of us are treated with love, respect and humanity. Racism is a scourge on everyone, not just people of color, for it denies our humanity as people.

Alison Forman-Katz *Burlington*

Everyone's history is important.

Kat Freeman *Burlington*

I feel like the school system failed me in not educating its students on ethnic studies. Not receiving an education on ethnic studies lead me to believe that racism ended with the civil rights movement. Thus, preventing me from being a knowledge democratic citizen.

Gina Clithero *Burlington*

I grew up in Vermont, and issues of race and colonization were not taught as ongoing processes. I went to Doty Memorial in Worcester, an elementary school without a single student of color, and a high school with only a handful of students who weren't white. All teachers and staff were white. I was taught that race issues were resolved thanks to the Voting Rights Act and Brown v.s. Board of Education, and that colonization was a discrete historical moment, rather than an ongoing process. It wasn't until attending UVM, and started talking to people about police shootings, that I realized that racism and white supremacy was alive and well in U.S. culture and in embedded in our economic and social institutions. My white classmates in high school used to call out the one black student in our grade using racial stereotypes and laugh it off as a joke. The one asian american student in our grade was also treated this way by the boys in our grade. Because there were no other students of color in our grade to defend them, there was nobody who could understand what was happening and intervene besides the two students of color, who likely experienced very different forms of racism in their everyday lives. Most of us would hear these jokes and it didn't sit well with us, but we didn't know why, so often times we wouldn't stand up to our peers. If white Vermont students were educated about these issues, not only would white students be less likely to make race jokes, but bystanders would have a sense of how their everyday actions perpetuate or intervene in systems of racial oppression. If white students were more educated about racism and ethnic studies in primary and secondary school, schools would be safer and more inclusive learning environments for students of color. As Vermont slowly becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, Vermont schools become a crucial site for facilitating conversation around identity and communicating across difference. Not only is this bill crucial for the people of color currently living in Vermont, but for white people too, because the state of Vermont benefits from diversity and in order to expand Vermont's workforce and population. Vermont needs to stop losing people of color who move out because they don't feel safe here. As a student at UVM, I have a number of friends who are people of color that are smart, passionate people who love certain parts of the state, but can't stay here because they don't feel safe or valued. That needs to change. In addition to improving the quality of life for people of color in the state, this bill would support the state as a whole by furthering economic development goals of workforce recruitment and retention. I hope that you will support this legislation, and any further legislation relating to improving the inclusivity and diversity of Vermont. Thank you for your time and your service, Gina Clithero

Jack Braunstein *Burlington*

Vermont has the chance to spark a generational change among our young people. Education about under-discussed chapters of our history and under-recognized people of our state has the potential to instill students with the kind of empathy across difference that comes from an understanding of shared history.

Lily Myers *Burlington*

I grew up in Vermont and did not learn nearly enough about diversity, race, and other cultures!

Eliza Giles *Burlington*

I grew up in Vermont and wish I had learned these things much earlier.

Kenneth Martel *Burlington*

Kids deserve to know the truth.

Alex Ellis *Burlington*

Acknowledgment of diversity and ethnic studies should begin early and be a component of one's education throughout their life!

Isabel Taylor *Burlington*

I think it's vital to begin teaching social awareness of race, equality, and equity from a young age, especially in a state as predominately white as Vermont. Improving education, empathy, and action can only serve to create a more beautiful and supportive community to be a part of.

Sarah Drew *Burlington*

Diversity education is so, so important for moving forward as an inclusive, forward thinking, supportive, diverse, and progressing state! For being so much better than we can be now! For moving forward!

Emma Urbaska *Burlington*

The earlier children can learn and practice equality, the better! I support all efforts/organizations working to ensure that ethnic diversity is understood, accepted, and celebrated by all!

Nell Carpenter *Burlington*

Education should not be interrupted by discrimination, racism, or microaggressions towards marginalized identities

Kacy Lane *Burlington*

inclusive education must start with our youth. Vermonters should learn the real history of their state at a young age so that their decisions can be informed when trying to make Vermont the best it can be.

Annie McAneny *Burlington*

Education (in ALL subjects) cannot be comprehensive without ethnic studies and an understanding of racism, xenophobia, and anti-blackness and their history are fundamental to learning as a whole!

Brianna Arnold *Burlington*

Racism ends by educating youth!

Corso Donati *Newfane*

I am a Vermonter who cares about all different Vermonters and sees the value in inclusive education.

Amanda Ziobro *Burlington*
DIVERSITY IS IMPORTANT.

Rory M. Fairfield

I went to a small school in Vermont for elementary school, and then a larger high school in the county, and I felt like ethnicity and issues around racial justice and history were not adequately covered in my classes. I had some excellent teachers who tried to get studies to think critically about ethnic studies and brought it into their curriculum, but that was not most teachers as it was not a requirement, and they were not always educated on the topic themselves. I support the bill because teachers should be provided with the resources to teach that material in their classrooms, and in a state with little diversity in a diverse world we should engage kids in thinking about social equity and learning about historical movements against oppression.

Alysa Burlington

It is important to be inclusive to all ethnicities in your studies to instill a positive understanding of diversity at a young age. Multiple ethnicities and cultures are a part of our land's history and it is important to learn about and respect all of them.

Naomi Wallner *Burlington*

I'm a future preschool teacher, and I believe children deserve the right to a diverse and inclusive education.

Kylie Arnold *Burlington*

Children are our future. It is only fair that we equip our future leaders with all the information about where they are from. To do anything else would be a disservice to the curiosity of these kids.

Amelia Dodds *Burlington*

right now not all people are recognized for who they are as an individual without stereotypes. everyone deserves that right. the study of ethnicity in schools across vermont should improve this.

Siera Carusone *Burlington*

I think it's extremely important as a state with a significant number of refugees and a growingly diverse community that we help our children become well educated about their fellow Vermonters, so that they may build better communities together.

Sierra Norford *Pittsford*

As an education student, I think the value of teaching younger children about ethnicity and race at a younger age is vital to fighting racism & white supremacy. Young children are entirely capable of understanding this kind of information and need to be taught it before society teaches them the opposite.

Katherine Cutler *Burlington*

It's important.

Katherine Elmer *Burlington*

Our children need to know and understand this important history and it has been omitted from general curricula in the past. If you want peace, work for justice!

Grace Viscito *Shelburne*

It's vital that students have an education that stretched beyond the west because it's vital that non-white students learn about their histories in the same way that white students do and because understanding these histories and cultures is vital for students to understand and engage with a globalized world.

Bella Palmieri *Burlington*

We need to start teaching the real and complete history of things in our school (all schools); we need to make all students feel represented in what they're learning, and not just on the side of the oppressed; we need to work towards social and racial equity in our current world and I think part of that starts with teaching a history which is completely inclusive and teaches about more than just the white colonizer.

Julia DiNardo *Burlington*

Inclusion should start at the youngest age possible, to teach kids how to include and accept one another for who they are.

Jules Lees *South Burlington*

I am an elementary and middle school educator and I think it is of paramount importance to teach a decolonized history to youth to create engaged citizens who are fully informed and empowered to be able to stand up in situations of injustice and discrimination.

Andrew Ridgeway *Burlington*

it's great for students to learn about racial and ethnic differences! Ethnic studies will foster an appreciation of diversity and help students learn how to navigate difficult social conversations about structural inequality.

Danielle Simard *Burlington*

A big part of achieving justice for people of color is understanding the history, and why they are not equal yet. Ignorance causes these problems to continue

Molly Baum *Burlington*

I think that learning about the history and culture (including indigenous and black culture is imperative to being a citizen of this state.

Sarah Trotter *Burlington*

Diversity and equality are important and we need to talk about it and address it in order to fix it.

Ethan Welch *Wallingford*

As a resident of Vermont, I believe in the diversification of our population and an attitude of acceptance to people of every background and race.

Sabrina Smith *Burlington*
Representation in education matters!!

Tina Escaja *South Burlington*
It is a responsibility and a right.

Caroline Trevarrow *Burlington*
It's important for students to grow up knowing the truth. It facilitates compassion, empathy and open communication. All of these are essential to a positive inclusive community.

Soledad Sloan *Burlington*
It is important for future students to have this background!

Olivia Diorio *Burlington*
Young students should have the right to an education that spans diverse topics and promotes equality and solidarity within our community.

Nina Carr *Burlington*
It is really important that we increase awareness of different ethnicities.

Zoe Rosen *Burlington*
It is important to learn about these issues at a young age

Janine Silvis *Burlington*
Students should know and engage with the complex narratives of all individuals. Ethnic studies will help students be more empathetic and see the world outside of themselves.

Malissa Christie *Burlington*
Our country is built on diversity and inclusion. It is extremely important for children to be taught about inclusivity in order to be able to grow up and promote community and also in order for minority students to feel a sense of belonging and purpose.

Juliana Landis *Burlington*
It is essential if we want to end white supremacy on campus and have meaningful understanding of each other.

Madison *Burlington*
It promotes love and care.

Angela Camacho DeSousa *Burlington*
The refugees and recent immigrant's cultures must be recognized and celebrated.

Megan Browning *Winooski*
we all need to be in relationship and comprehensive ethnic studies in Vermont is a part of building the collective capacity for humanity to thrive.

Rachel Byrd *Burlington*

All children deserve a safe and inclusive environment that promotes learning and includes the teachings of a diverse history of all backgrounds in school.

Lachlan Ziegler *Burlington*

Inclusivity of all peoples cultures and history must be equally represented!

Tom Shebell *Burlington*

It will expose students to social issues such as explicit racism as well as subliminal racism and bring awareness to privilege and power.

Katelyn Lipton *Cornwall*

Ignoring the history and presence of an entire group of people is unacceptable. In order to have socially responsible and accepting citizens, education starts with children.

Megan Camp *Shelburne*

It is our responsibility to tell a more whole story.

Elizabeth McGavisk *Burlington*

It's crucial that we teach appropriate classes starting from a young age in VT, a state that's so predominately white where students of color will feel the impacts of white supremacy even more. By ensuring that all students get a quality education regarding ethnic studies, all students will benefit and it will create VT a more equitable place to live.

Sarah Shaw *Burlington*

An inclusive, safe society starts with an education system that recognizes and empowers diversity.

Claire Maroney *Burlington*

Every child should be able to relate to the history we learn in schools. It's impossible to get a well-rounded education if only one portion of the population's history is taught in schools.

Sam Stanley *Burlington*

It's necessary to learn about this topic because it's so often and ignored and it's such an important aspect of history. People of color should be able to learn about their own history not only white history.

Kerri McAllister *Richmond*

it is important for people to be grounded in their own culture and respect others who may be different from them. With Vermont's diversifying population it is important that we provide young people with the support and opportunities to grow up in a community that acknowledges and embraces the value in our differences and has the skills to navigate any challenges that arise as a result of our differences.

Courtney Mulcahy *Burlington*

Diverse representation in our schools is so important for all Vermonters because we know euro-centric history is not the only story in Vermont! Vermonters have to learn about the history of colonization, eugenics and the diverse histories of our state and H.794 will make that possible.

Fred C. Lawrence *South Newfane*

It will help infuse children with a chronological sense of their own and others' VT history.

Kelsey Bruder *West Townshend*

Learning about the history of racism and oppression in Vermont, and throughout the United States, is extremely important to better understand the pervasiveness of racism within our systems and can enable us to fight against the erasure of these histories.

Morgan Mahdavi *Newfane*

Ethnic studies as a requirement in Vermont schools is one step to making Vermont an open and inclusive place, of righting some of the historical wrongs our state has made against people of color and indigenous people, and of creating a state that is truly committed to equity and justice, rather than one that just pays lip service. THIS IS SO IMPORTANT.

Hannah Patterson *Middlebury*

Moving towards justice requires recognizing and growing from a conception of our past that has not been revised.

Sofi Hecht *Middlebury*

It is more important now than ever to create inclusive narratives in classrooms so that people can take responsibility, learn, and not repeat our racist history.

Johanna M Gardner *Newfane*

Because we live in a diverse world and in order to live well together, it is crucial to understand each other. School is the perfect garden in which to sow the seeds of compassion, appreciation of difference, and peaceful co-existence.

Emily Sun *Middlebury*

Representation matters.

Elizabeth Bissell *Putney*

Our children need to under the true history of our state.

Gabrel Francesco Vanni-Phillips *Newfane*

The ignorance and outright oblivious nature of ethnic studies in Vermont must be addressed. As a largely white rural state, kids growing up in Vermont are susceptible to a lack of worldliness and awareness to other cultures and communities in the country. This lack of knowledge has the capability to foster hatred, bigotry, and prejudice. Coupled with the increasing amounts of radicalization and persecution via the growing

internet - it is absolutely essential that comprehensive ethnic studies are implemented into Vermont public schools.

Casey Lynn Brinkman *Vergennes*

In Vermont we live in a comfortable bubble of whiteness, and it's so important that from a young age children learn compassion and empathy for all people. The best way to ensure that the next generation understands and respects cultural differences is to educate them from a young age not to exotify or demonize that which is "other."

Thomas Walters *Richmond*

Because it's the right thing to do.

Vera Simon-Nobes *Charlotte*

It's about time.

Vignesh Ramachandran *Middlebury*

Because we cannot ignore the genocide of Native Americans.

Matthew Dyroff *Colchester*

I believe it is best for the population if ethnic studies are incorporated into the curriculum.

Mikhaila Finch *Colchester*

It's important, and vital.

Vanessa Bonebo *Colchester*

It is an important key in combatting racism.

Elaine Roman *Colchester*

DIVERSITY IN CURRICULUM IS CRUCIAL FOR IDENTITY FORMATION.

Sarah Donahue *Colchester*

Cultural Competency is important!

Amanda Greaves *Colchester*

Having diversity in our curriculum cultivates a deeper understanding of people with varying social identities. Seeing the standard white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied figure across all disciplines is exclusive to all the other empowering figures we never learn about.

Mariana mariana.munoz1792@gmail.com *Burlington*

It enriches everyone's knowledge about the real life world and all of its wonderful diversity and cultural history

Apankoff@uvm.edu *Burlington*

I want our youth to be able to make informed decisions when they grow up.

tripdub@gmail.com Burlington
VT kids need to learn about their history past present and future.

Murray Burlington
Having a rich understanding of your state's history and if the various backgrounds people come from helps create a more well-rounded individual.

Anna arherman@uvm.edu
Educating privileged children on other non-white perspectives could impact the future of racial/ethnic equality in this country. Also this kind of representation could foster a sense of inclusion for children of color in this country.

Julie Kozak Worcester
All ethnic contributions and history deserve to be learned about and understood by Vermonters state wide.

Emily Plump Huntington
A less euro- centric view of history and the world is a benefit for all students.

Eliza LaRock Yonkers
I support this bill because it should ALREADY be a basic right for children to be learning in an accepting and actively inclusive environment.

Allison McGovern Westport
The pervasiveness of white supremacy in the state of Vermont is confirmed by its overwhelmingly white population. To deconstruct this mindset, such studies that are proposed in this bill must be introduced to enforce a widely shared mindset of acceptance and inclusion of ethnic and racial diversity. Many university students' mentalities that align with this mindset are seen as radical by such a large percentage of Vermonters, and this must change now. This bill will instill the acceptance and kindness that will only aid Vermont's progress towards equality and overall improvement across all boards.

Harper Simpson Evanston
All identities deserve to be represented in our nation's history!!

Mikaela Dalton Copper Center
I used to live in Vermont and moved away but I still love the state and believe that ethnic studies is critical to our kids growing up in a more compassionate world than we have now.

Brianna Lambert Jenkins
I think representation is an amazing way to dismantle any sort a racist, sexist, xenophobic beliefs in the educational system at a young age before they further develop. I also believe that it's important for us to not be so ethnocentric, and to be mindful that not everyone else's experiences and histories are the same as ours.

Ben Gluhosky

Diverse education is crucial!

Jordan Kleiman

It is important that we learn about the whole history so we can learn from our mistakes.

Caleb Buerger

It's important.

Kaitlyn Capprini

It's imperative that we have diverse, inclusive education from the very beginning of our schooling to ensure we have an informed population

Jamie Gay

This makes for better informed voters and a more just state.

Phoebe Paron

Diversity is important everywhere and Vermont is no exception. Vermont communities should take every chance to promote diversity especially in schools so young people can grow up knowing and understanding the importance of diversity.

Melissa McCole

Diversity and ethnic studies/representation should be integrated in everyone's education since kindergarten in order to foster a more educated and socially conscious population.

Rob Persons

Vermont must continue to be a leader on racial and social justice issues. People must be properly educated to enable proper empathy and solidarity with ethnic groups they do not identify with.

Jayvin Card

education is the best tool for combatting ignorance, bigotry and intolerance. The sooner it starts, the better

Isabel Jamerson

I want students to understand the true origins of the land they live on. Education in the US often only includes historical narratives of white people. This is a major problem and leads to ignorance, insensitivity, entitlement, and a lack of compassion. I want this to change for the students of VT. I hope that they can have an understanding of the complexities of race, gender, religion, ableism, and LGBTQ issues earlier on than I did in my schooling career as it will lead to a more harmonious, coexistent, and equitable society.

Matea Mills-Andruk

It is important for children and adults to be aware of what they are part of.

Avery

Children deserve to be educated in a way that is inclusive of all cultures. They deserve to see their identities represented in their education.

Becky M

Vermonters should know the real history of the state as early as they can. Why teach things that don't include a portion of the population who populated our state?

Christina McLaughlin

I'm biracial and it's time to end cultural ignorance.

Kizzy Joseph

We need a more inclusive education system!

Cait Fitzgerald

We need more diverse representation and education in Vermont.

Phoebe Tucker

Education helps to dissolve ignorance.

Caitlyn Albert

It is basic human rights.

Alec Collins

Vermont students should be exposed to diverse narratives and viewpoints to be representative of the diverse range of histories and cultures that are present in the country and state. There are legacies of oppression against people of color both in Vermont and nationally that it is critical for students to be exposed to in coming to understand the current sociopolitics of America.

Sara Moore

I think it important that all students learn a more complete understanding of history. Some of my family has been in the NEK of Vermont for generations and I wish we had learned important critical analysis skills by looking at our own history in Vermont, New England, the US and Western society. Kids understand power dynamics, they live and perpetuate them through their social networks. Learning a critical understanding of power might help.

Julie Elfin *Bethesda*

Vermont is one small part of a large, diverse nation and world.

Sean Taylor *Meriden*

It's important to introduce the concepts of ethnicity, equality, and an honest take on history early on in a child's education. The earlier that discussing these topics becomes normalized and familiar, the better, thereby providing a stepping stone to progress and a better understanding and appreciation for the society we live in.

Emma Schoeppner

It is important for everyone to appreciate and respect diversity and realize how everyone benefits as a result of it.

Greta Burlington

Responsible citizenship should begin with childhood education. It should not be postponed to college education simply because it is uncomfortable; every citizen has a right to know the TRUE and comprehensive history of the state and the country.

Sarah *mewraven@gmail.com*

Students deserve to see themselves in their school curriculum.

Jamisen Fallot