

Amanda Garces - Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools in response to testimony by the State Board. 1/24/2018

Dear House Education Committee Members,

I am writing to urge you to please consider moving forward with H.3. I cannot begin to express how important this is for our kids, for all of our kids. I am attaching a document of support that we compiled last year for the Education Committee that is still relevant. Also, I would like to share with you our community forum that was recorded by ORCA media. If you have five minutes of downtime, I would encourage you to just listen to the testimony of Zymora Davinchi that begins at [minute 36:24](#). Her testimony is powerful and an echo of many other students whose voices you didn't get to hear.

From my understanding of Ms. Huling's testimony, there is a misunderstanding of the intent of the bill. The bill does not in a way mandate curriculum but seeks to review standards that have been mandated by the State Board of Education and recommend changes to all content standards to include the histories and contributions of the social and racial/ethnic groups as defined by H.3. According to the Vermont Agency of Education website, "Vermont State Board Adopted Standards

Vermont has adopted a variety of standards including the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for English and Mathematics, the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), the SHAPE America Physical Education Standards, the National Health Education Standards, the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards, the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS), and Jump\$tart Standards in K-12 Personal Finance Education...The Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities (2000), which were created in conjunction with Grade Expectations, to improved student learning in 2000, have been mostly phased out and replaced by more current standards that are national in scope. The Grade Expectations that are still relevant for Vermont are [World Languages](#) and [Family Consumer Sciences](#)."

As it is true that we modeled now H.3 after Oregon's [HB2845](#) we have taken the best of the bill and applied the Vermont reality. According to Title **16 V.S.A. § 165** (9) the statute gives the State Board the authority to "Implement and **continually update standards for student performance** in appropriate content areas and at appropriate intervals in the continuum from

kindergarten to grade 12 and methods of assessment to determine attainment of the standards for student performance. The standards shall be rigorous, challenging and designed to prepare students to participate in and contribute to the democratic process and to compete in the global marketplace. The standards shall include a standard for reading level proficiency for students completing grade three".

We understand the task of reviewing and recommending changes is a daunting task. However, we believe that the working group members outlined in H.3 have the necessary knowledge to tackle this task and together identify the resources, and experts needed to succeed.

Our research has pointed to other states who have taken this issue seriously. In July 10, 2018 Indiana announced a [new landmark Ethnic Studies Standards](#) and their Department of Education page has available resources worth exploring. Although Indiana's standards are just for high school students, we would like Vermont to lead the way in ensuring all of our grades have standards that help teachers and districts think about every child.

To help us wrap our heads around the difference between the standards and curriculum, [Indiana offers a good explanation](#) "standards outline what students need to know, understand, and be able to do. Academic standards are benchmark measures that define what students should know and be able to do at specified grade levels beginning in kindergarten and progressing through grade twelve. The standards are promulgated as state regulations. As such, they must be used as the basis for curriculum and instruction in Indiana's accredited schools. The academic standards are NOT a curriculum; therefore, identifying the sequence of instruction in each grade—what will be taught and how long requires concerted effort and attention at the district/school level. Academic standards do not prescribe any particular curriculum. Curriculum tools are selected at the district/school level and adopted through the local school board. No student, by virtue of poverty, age, race, gender, cultural or ethnic background, disabilities, or family situation will ultimately be exempt from learning the required academic standards. It is acknowledged that individual students may learn in different ways and at different rates. Academic standards focus on what students will need to learn in order to be college and career ready and to be competitive in the job market."

The support that the Vermont Coalition for Ethnic and Social Equity in Schools has received is enormous. H.3 as introduced is the result of amendments and a concentrated effort by institutions and individuals that believe that this is right for Vermont. We believe that what is

outlined is doable and it is in the scope of the Vermont State Board to support this bill that seeks to bring enormous contributions to our kids learning.

This work is the beginning of a long road. Many schools are already doing this work, many students are taking it up themselves to learn outside of the classroom about themselves. We have many educators committed to this work because they know of its value and importance. Standards that include ethnic and social equity do not just benefit our marginalized groups but all students. To paraphrase Shaddiin Garcia if you take one classroom full of students with only one Latinx student and remove her to teach her about [Sabrina González Pasterski](#) only one student will benefit. Standards level the field and it's just the floor not the ceiling.

Our historical moment, amidst our current administration that denigrates our communities every day, is now. We have waited far too long and we have reached a point where we need to lead with solutions. This is us leading with love and a cadre of experts ready to dive in.