



Reject the Erasure of Race in Texas Schools in SB 3

IDRA Testimony against Texas Senate Bill 3, presented by Dr. Altheria Caldera to the Senate State Affairs Committee, July 15, 2021

My name is Dr. Altheria Caldera, and I am an education policy fellow at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan, education non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. We oppose Senate Bill 3.

An examination of SB 3 reveals central truths. SB 3, the underlying legislation HB 3979, and similar bills filed across the country value ignorance more than knowledge, silence about race more than guided critique, and a glorified history more than difficult truths.

SB 3 strips from HB 3979 the adoption of knowledge and skills that deepen students' awareness of the history of Native Americans; neglects the impact that Native American, Blacks, and Latinos had on the founding of the country; and treats as insignificant movements for equality like the civil rights and women's rights movements. While the legislature should have never gotten into the business of dictating specific TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), you have done so with the passage of HB 3979. And now that you have, selectively stripping the TEKS that focus on communities of color, women and movements for justice sends a signal to the students of Texas that many of their elected officials simply do not value those specific histories, cultures and contributions.

This signal is amplified by other provisions in the bill that prohibit truthful discussions of history and current events and that limit students' access to knowledge and important learning opportunities. Instead of allowing students to analyze the ways racism and white supremacy shape our shared history, this bill and the underlying legislation HB 3979, propose a colorblind approach that ignores the violence and dehumanization forced upon people of color. Supporters of this bill persist despite experts warning against denying access to such knowledge. According to a letter written by the American Historical Association (2021), these major themes in the nation's history are generally accepted by history professionals and should be taught in schools.

It is important to make clear that your vote on this bill is a moral one that will send strong messages to all Texans, not just your constituents. Supporting this bill indicates your commitment to curricula that reflects the perceived heroism of founders but not their fallibility. Your support will restrict students and teachers from confronting and engaging with history in ways that lead to a more humane future. No doubt about it, the lack of historical literacy brought on by SB 3 will hurt all of us.

Voting no on SB 3, on the other hand, demonstrates your confidence in teachers' ability to acknowledge diversity without being divisive. Moreover, opposing SB 3 is evidence of your belief in students' ability to grapple with complex histories and respect multiple perspectives. Students

who have access to this kind of curriculum will be ready for civic leadership that moves our state and country toward their democratic ideals.

Recommendations

1. Vote against SB 3 and similar legislation because it denies students the opportunity to learn authentic history that represents diverse cultures and perspectives.
2. Support development of curricula that encourages critical dialogue about race and racism.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., IDRA Deputy Director of Policy, at chloe.sikes@idra.org.

Resources

American Historical Association. (2021, May). AHA Issues Letter Objecting to Texas Bill.

[https://www.historians.org/news-and-advocacy/aha-advocacy/aha-letter-objecting-to-texas-bill-\(may-2021\)](https://www.historians.org/news-and-advocacy/aha-advocacy/aha-letter-objecting-to-texas-bill-(may-2021)).

Gomez, I. (2021, May). Visions and Provisions – Planning for K-12 Ethnic Studies Implementation. IDRA Newsletter.

<https://www.idra.org/resource-center/visions-and-provisions-planning-for-k-12-ethnic-studies-implementation/>

Caldera, A. (2021, May). Texas HB 3979 Will Hurt Students by Curtailing Schools' Equity Efforts. IDRA Newsletter.

<https://www.idra.org/resource-center/texas-hb-3979-will-hurt-students-by-curtailling-schools-equity-efforts/>

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.