Students Suffer Under Classroom Censorship
TLEEC Testimony against SB 2089, submitted to the Texas Senate Education Committee, March 29, 2023

Chairman Creighton and Members:

The Texas Legislative Education Equity Coalition (TLEEC) is a collaborative of over 30 organizations and individuals with the mission to improve the quality of public education for all children, with a focus on racial equity. We advocate at the local, state and national levels for high-quality teaching, curriculum and instructional practices and bilingual education for emergent bilingual students as well as fair funding and enhanced college access and success.

TLEEC opposes SB 2089 because it furthers classroom censorship through state-approved instructional materials. Students’ education should include comprehensive and accurate accounts of history, current events, evidence-based research and diverse perspectives in texts.

However, SB 2089 imposes limits on the instructional materials that the state should adopt by requiring materials to reflect “positive aspects” of U.S. history (Section 1 (b)(1)(F)) and treating “all groups fairly” (Section 1 (b)(1)(H)) in historical accounts. Since the passage of last session’s censorship legislation, HB 3979 (87R) and SB 3 (87, 2), school districts have debated what these vague terms mean. For instance, in Southlake’s Carroll ISD, there was initial guidance from the district that the Holocaust be taught “from both sides” (Hixenbaugh & Hylton, 2021).

Under SB 2089, a Texas public school textbook could be rejected for saying: “There is no ‘both sides’ to the Civil War. The American South won because the Confederacy lost, and since then as the United States, we have grown more equal and inclusive through the hard-fought struggle of the long Civil Rights Movement.” While there may not be a socially acceptable “contrasting view” to that statement, there are many people who reject the idea and would, if they could, reject its teaching in public schools. Texans, however, do not have that short of a memory. We know the Confederacy lost, and it only took 100 years to fully – well mostly – desegregate public schools.

Too solid to be unmarked and too conspicuous to be candid, the history of Texas will not be contained by statutory attempts to silence the past. Dictating what Texas public school students can or cannot learn about our past – ugliness and all – from textbooks or instructional materials will not erase those events from our history. SB 2089, should it become law, will drive more educators from the schools and students they love because it further diminishes their autonomy as educators. Worse still, it will underprepare millions of young Texans for the complicated, often ugly world in which they live. Textbooks and instructional materials should meet the evolving educational needs of students by teaching ugly parts of our history and
the topics that make us uncomfortable, not evading them. Only then can we, as a state, outgrow the traumas of our shared history.

**Recommendation**
To avoid furthering classroom censorship, TLEEC recommends this body oppose SB 2089, and support measures that advance rigorous educational opportunities, such as ethnic studies, dual credit and Advanced Placement courses, and accurate and comprehensive instructional materials.

**Resources**


*For questions, please contact TLEEC either through Dr. Chloe Latham Sikes at IDRA (chloe.sikes@idra.org), or Jaime Puente at Every Texan (puente@everytexan.org).*

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**TLEEC Member Organizations**

- ARISE Adelante
- Austin Justice Coalition
- Breakthrough Central Texas
- Coalition of Texans with Disabilities (CTD)
- Children at Risk
- Dr. Hector P. Garcia G.I. Forum
- Easterseals Central Texas
- Educators in Solidarity
- Ethnic Studies Network of Texas (ESNTX)
- Every Texan
- Houston Community Voices for Public Education
- IDRA (Intercultural Development Research Association)
- Measure
- McNeil Educational Foundation for Ecumenical Leadership
- Mexican American Civil Rights Institute (MACRI)
- Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
- Mexican American School Boards Association (MASBA)
- National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS)
- – Tejas Foco
- San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Texas American Federation of Teachers
- Texas Association for Bilingual Education (TABE)
- Texas Association for Chicanos in Higher Education (TACHE)
- Texas Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education (TADOHE)
- Texas Association of Mexican American Chambers of Commerce (TAMACC)
- Texas Center for Education Policy, University of Texas – Austin
- Texas Hispanics Organized for Political Education (HOPE)
- Texas League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
- Texas NAACP
- The Arc of Texas
- The Education Trust in Texas
- UnidosUS (formerly known as NCLR)