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## Georgia Students Need their Legislators to Make Smart Decisions

As Georgia Legislature convenes, IDRA is sharing highlights here. [Sign up to receive future advocacy and policy news through our Georgia Education CAFE Advocacy Network.](#)

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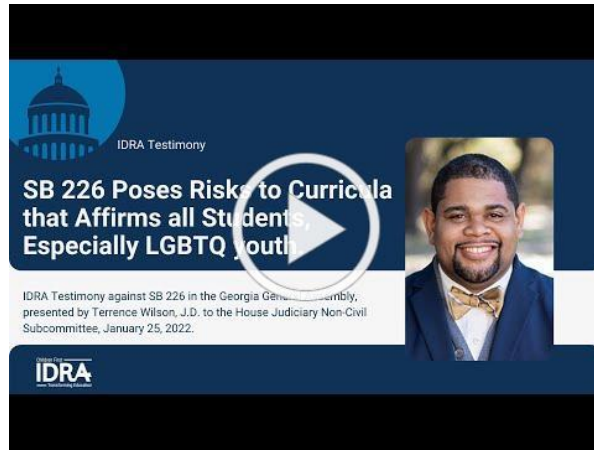
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[See IDRA's policy priorities for Georgia education \(PDF\).](#)

January 27, 2022

## Students Deserve Access to Diverse Curricula that Supports All Aspects of their Identity

Terrence Wilson, J.D., testified this week before a subcommittee of the Georgia House against **Senate Bill 226** because of the threat it poses to the access and use of curricula that affirm the identities of all students, particularly students that identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community.



"We are concerned that, under the current processes, this measure will inappropriately limit material that covers topics that explain and address themes from individuals with marginalized identities, including racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and religious minorities," he stated. Terrence is IDRA's regional policy and community engagement director.

[Read Testimony Against SB 226](#)

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# Bill Introduced for Classroom Censorship at the Expense of Students and Educators

*by Terrence Wilson, J.D.*

On January 14, legislators in Georgia decided to follow the misguided examples of fellow southern states [Arkansas](#), [Florida](#), [Louisiana](#), [Mississippi](#), [Virginia](#), [South Carolina \(via budget section 1.105\)](#), [North Carolina](#), [Texas](#) and [Tennessee](#) by introducing its own version of classroom censorship legislation via Georgia's House Bill 888. The bill includes several provisions that will harm schools and students and represents a direct threat to truthful teaching and creating culturally-sustaining school environments for all students. As such, IDRA opposes this bill and asks all individuals who care about supporting students to do the same.

## Elements of the Classroom Censorship Bill

- HB 888 codifies language that denies the existence of systemic racism, which may make future efforts to eliminate racism via legislation more difficult and ignore and devalue the lived experience of students and families who experience racism.
- HB 888 creates additional burdens on teachers by forcing them to find new primary and supplementary instructional materials that fit legislators' restrictive definitions.
- HB 888 prevents education agencies, school boards, administrators and teachers from discussing, using course materials, creating training, or hiring speakers or trainers that address concepts related to racism and its historical and current operation, particularly in the United States.
- HB 888 prohibits coursework or course credit for students' participation or association with an organization that engages in lobbying, social or public policy advocacy, or partisan activities, which limits students' ability to understand the importance of civic participation in a democracy.
- HB 888 requires "impartial and politically nonpartisan" presentations when discussing racism, controversial aspects of history, and historical treatment of individuals based on their identity, which will likely lead to fewer educators covering these topics out of fear of financial penalty, an effect that will diminish students' opportunities to accurately comprehend race and other aspects of history.
- HB 888 creates a new requirement that schools list all instructional materials on their websites and make these materials available to parents upon request, which will add bureaucratic burdens on educators already stretched thin due to the pandemic.
- HB 888 establishes a new complaint procedure for parents, students, school employees, district attorneys or the attorney general to report alleged violations of these rules, which will likely build a climate of fear, especially among teachers, and lead to further attrition of teachers.

- HB 888 establishes a 20% funding penalty for violations, which jeopardizes a collective \$1.74 billion in funding available to Georgia's schools and would create huge financial deficits in affected districts and impacts budgets even for compliant schools.
- HB 888 creates new rules applying to public higher education in Georgia which would allow individuals students, faculty and other school personnel to take individual positions on any public policy issue but prohibit these institutions from weighing in on any public policy issues not related to education, a provision that would likely diminish the ability for public colleges to leverage their extensive expertise to inform public dialogue on important public policy issues.

This legislation represents a direct threat to the teaching and learning truthful history in a culturally sustaining educational environment that appreciates and supports the experience of students of color. We ask all individuals and organizations that care about culturally-sustaining curricula and classrooms to join us in opposition to this bill.

## Time to Stop Hitting Georgia's Children

by Morgan Craven, J.D.

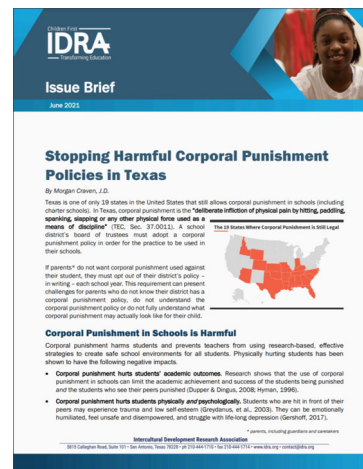
Georgia is one of 19 states in the country that still allows children to be hit in schools. The state's outdated and harmful corporal punishment law authorizes teachers and other school personnel to beat children for discipline purposes. Georgia's [House Bill 892](#) and [House Bill 904](#) seek to change this barbaric practice.

State policies across the country allow even very young children to be spanked, hit, paddled and slapped in their classrooms. **We know** this exposes children to physical and psychological pain and can compromise academic success and healthy connections to school.

Additionally, **data reveal** that Black children and students with disabilities are disproportionately hit in schools, making eliminating corporal punishment a pressing civil rights and racial justice issue. **One study** illustrated the connection between corporal punishment and the history of violence and racial injustice in this country; it found that students had a higher likelihood of being hit in the counties where higher numbers of lynchings occurred in the past.

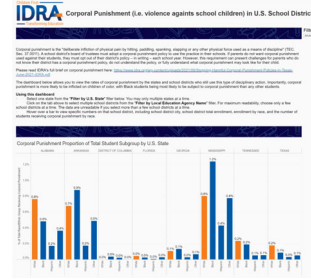
**We urge the public and policymakers to protect Georgia's students from the harm and humiliation of being hit in their classrooms.** House Bill 892 eliminates the use of corporal punishment in all Georgia public schools – this is critical. House Bill 904 also eliminates corporal punishment and adds limits to liability for teachers for certain situations where physical contact with a student occurs.

We also urge you to support other organizations that are working to end corporal punishment across the country. For example, the [Nollie Jenkins Family Center](#) and the [Mississippi Coalition to End Corporal Punishment](#) have been pushing for safe schools



for all children in Mississippi, including during the current state legislative session where a ban on corporal punishment has also been filed.

For more information about corporal punishment, including [data dashboards](#), links to resources, and information about the federal [Protecting Our Students in Schools Act](#), see [IDRA's End Corporal Punishment in Schools](#) work.



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