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HB 3979, the “How-to Guide for Whitewashing History,” is Derailed by Procedural Move

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Today House Bill 3979, a harmful bill that would have prohibited Texas teachers from exploring important topics related to race, gender and justice was blocked from passage. A procedural maneuver led by Rep. James Talarico stopped the bill’s advancement and sent it back to the Senate, effectively derailing the bill given the deadlines for bills to pass.

“HB 3979 would have been so harmful for Texas students and teachers, and we are glad it was stopped today,” said IDRA Deputy Director of Advocacy Ana Ramón. “But it is important to remain vigilant, because the dangerous provisions in HB 3979 could still be amended onto other bills moving through the process during the final days of the legislative session.”

Even as they called for strong civics education and a collective commitment to democratic ideals, many Texas Legislators refused to listen to the voices of

Texans who opposed HB 3979.

The bill attempted to control students' and teachers' thoughts and conversations about current events and social justice issues in schools by discouraging honest discussions in Texas classrooms. And it mischaracterized and vilified the important and timely conversations about diversity and equity happening in schools, homes and workplaces across the country.

In allegiance to the bill's goal to censor civics discussions in schools, the process used by the Legislature to advance this bill also censored civic discussion about the bill itself. The legislature circumvented the normal process of giving adequate notice for the public to provide testimony, leading advocates to hold their own [virtual press conference](#) and [Facebook live hearing](#) so the voices of concerned families and educators could be heard.

"We refuse to be erased," said IDRA President & CEO Celina Moreno. "The Legislature tried to deny students, teachers and our broad-based coalition the opportunity to participate in the policymaking process because they couldn't handle the truth about HB 3979."

The bill would have also prohibited schools from accessing private funding for certain curriculum development and materials, and it barred students from participating in civics activities for course credit. An IDRA analysis found that the bill conflicts with many of the state's curriculum standards in the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS).

A Senate amendment to the bill created a nearly \$15 million price tag. The cost would likely have been even higher considering the loss in private funding and costs to defend against probable litigation, replace instructional materials, settle contract disputes, and rework educator training.

[Ninety-five organizations opposed](#) HB 3979, including student coalitions, school districts, chambers of commerce, community groups, religious organizations and educator associations. [Over 200 historians](#) issued a letter in opposition to the bill stating, "A truthful accounting of history will allow students to learn the lessons of the past to help build a more equal and inclusive future." Several school districts threatened litigation against the bill, and legislators received over 14,600 emails urging them to oppose the bill.

House Bill 3979 threatened the classroom learning, educator professional development, and student engagement opportunities that are happening in schools across the state. This bill, like the similar ones being filed in other states, is an embarrassment to Texas. We harm our students – particularly our Black, Indigenous, Latino, and Asian American students – when we do not help them to engage in thoughtful and truthful conversations about the racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination we know impact their lives.

We are dismayed by how far this horrendous bill advanced in the legislative process, but we remain committed to continuing our work to create safe and culturally-sustaining schools that serve all students.

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Learn More

[List of Organizations Opposing Texas HB 3979](#)

[Video from our Coalition Against Texas HB3979 Virtual Press Conference](#)

[Video from our Save Civics! Virtual Town Hall](#)

[Opposition letter by the American Historical Association](#)

[Letter by 229 historians against HB 3979](#)



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IDRA works hand-in-hand with hundreds of thousands of educators and families each year in communities and classrooms around the country. All our work rests on an unwavering commitment to creating self-renewing schools that value and promote the success of students of all backgrounds.