



## **IDRA Testimony Against the Removal of DEI Standards from Teacher Certification Standards**

**Submitted by Jonathan Peraza Campos, M.S., to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, June 7, 2023**

Good afternoon members of the Commission,

My name is Jonathan Peraza Campos, M.S., and I am an Education Policy Fellow at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan 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. I am also a trained educational researcher and practitioner by Georgia State University and have spent the last six years as an educator, educational policy and research professional, and youth development leader.

My presence as a gay, Latino, bilingual, first-generation educator is invaluable. My impact has been clear every time I see the surprise and enthusiasm in students' faces when they see someone who looks like them and shares their background, language, and story. The classes I have taught about Black, Latino, and multicultural history and literature have empowered my students to see themselves as the intellectuals, leaders, contributors, and change agents that we need them to be in a 21st century democracy.

My advocacy for students who have been discriminated against in our schools and who are toiling in the inequitable conditions of our society today has yielded graduates and higher-achievers in schools and communities that have labeled them as failures. Despite my prowess as an educator, the state of Georgia and this governing body are telling me that the diversity that I contribute, that the equity and inclusion lenses that guide my teaching philosophy and pedagogy have no place in Georgia classrooms, despite decades of educational research supporting the success of DEI and culturally responsive teaching practices in schools.

Teachers and schools guided by the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion have the best academic and social-psychological outcomes with our most marginalized students and our most under-resourced schools.

The classroom censorship and book banning policies across the country and in Georgia along with the purging of DEI from our educational institutions harkens back to some of the darkest periods of human history. When European colonizers arrived in what is now

the Americas, they burned the codices and knowledge centers of indigenous peoples across the continent. Later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the U.S. and Canadian governments kidnapped indigenous children and forcibly assimilated them – forbidding them from using their heritage names, languages, and cultural practices, leaving a legacy of trauma and unmarked graves. During the antebellum period, enslaved Black children were physically mutilated for daring to learn how to read and any attempts to teach enslaved people literacy was met with severe punishment. In the history of Latino education, Mexican American and Puerto Rican children were forbidden from speaking Spanish and using their heritage names, only to be met with physical punishment by their teachers. In 1933, Nazi soldiers and supporters in Germany burned one of the most groundbreaking collections of research on sexuality and gender diversity in the world because it did not align with Nazi ideology of extermination and racial-national superiority. These were the oppressive laws and social norms of their day, but we are in a new day.

Members of the commission, as you reflect on the history that we have evolved from – a history of exclusion and the purging of diversity, equity, and inclusion – I hope you consider the implications of continuing to purge these critical values and practices from our teacher standards and certification programs.

An attack on diversity, equity, and inclusion is an attack on the students that we are meant to serve in our education system. I urge you to reconsider eliminating diversity, equity, inclusion, social justice, antiracism, and culturally responsive teaching from our preparation standards. Our educators and our students need you to be bold and to rely on the best, research-based practices that guarantee an equitable education.

*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 leading policy analyses and advocacy; dynamic teacher training and principal coaching; useful research, evaluation and frameworks for action; and innovative student, family and community engagement.*