



Censorship is Hurtful – SB 3 and the Underlying HB 3979 Hurt all Students

IDRA Testimony Against SB 3, presented by Morgan Craven, J.D., to the Senate State Affairs Committee, July 15, 2021

My name is Morgan Craven, J.D., I am the National Director of Policy, Advocacy, and Community Engagement at IDRA and I am testifying against SB 3. We believe there are many problems with SB 3 and the underlying bill HB 3979. However, I want to focus on one point we keep hearing in defense of the bills.

We have heard there are concerns that a truthful account of history and current events might be hurtful for some students. We do not want any student to feel hurt in school, but I would point out two problems with the idea that SB 3 and the underlying bill HB 3979 help to solve that issue.

First, the most hurtful thing we can do is deny students the opportunity to fully explore history, current events, and the provable truths of our complex history. Censorship is hurtful. Denying the obvious is hurtful. Gaslighting students by trying to convince them that what is there is not is hurtful.

Instead. Talking about historical complexities, allowing heroic people to also be flawed, examining the underpinnings of progress and setbacks, acknowledging the many stories that are part of our collective narrative, discussing the persistent and current impacts of a long history of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination – these are the things that will ultimately protect students. These discussions will allow them to become engaged and thoughtful people who deeply and passionately believe they can participate in our society and the way we hope it will one day be.

Second. If you truly do not want students to feel hurt or targeted it would really help to stop routinely denying and de-emphasizing the hurt that Black students, Indigenous students, Latino students, Asian students, girls, LGBTQ students and other historically-marginalized groups have long felt in their schools.

If you are truly worried about *all* students and the hurt they may feel, you wouldn't shut down conversations in classrooms or deny them credit for their work with important civics organizations. Instead, you would focus on policies that will have a real, positive impact on *all* students, like removing police from schools, ending punitive discipline practices, and expanding access to coursework that prepares all students for college should they choose to go. You would expand ethnic studies courses, truly invest in emergent bilingual students, and adopt culturally-sustaining practices in schools.

But you are not doing those things here, with these bills. SB 3 and the underlying HB 3979 hurt all students. Anyone with a basic understanding of history knows that in no context, in no place in the world, at no point in time, has controlling thought and suppressing speech helped anyone. And it won't help here. We are better and stronger when we grapple with the truth, promote free speech and ideas, and trust teachers and students to have the conversations that prepare them for this world.

We have HB 3979 as the law, for now. We urge you to not double down on that bad policy and instead reject the hurtful additions in SB 3.

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.

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