

Dear Chairman Senator McCrory, Chairman Representative Sanchez and esteemed members of the Education Committee. I am State Representative Bobby Gibson who serves the 15th District. I am writing in support of Raised Bill #7082, which was originally introduced by myself the first day of session as HB #5009. I am in support of bill #7082 because African American History is American History.

I have been an educator for 24 years. During that time I have taught students of all nationalities. I have made it a point to incorporate the histories of all of my students into my lessons. It is extremely enjoyable, enriching, and so valuable to be able to teach my students about one another. However this is not being done all over the state. All of our students don't have knowledge of African American History. Many times when I ask a student to name a famous African American Person, the average two responses will be the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or President Barack Obama. I cannot tell African American Students what country they came from. African American students cannot go visit the countries their families. African American Students don't have a native language. African American Students lack knowledge of their true identity.

One's identity comes from the images they see. In our society African American Students constantly see images of people that don't look like themselves. When they turn on the news, look at their teachers in the classroom, or pictures in their History Books they don't see images of themselves. So where does that leave them? No country. No language of their own. They have very few powerful images to help to build their self-esteem. Is this what we want for our African American Students? Is this what we want for any of our students?

All of our students can benefit from the mandatory inclusion of African American Studies in our schools. It is the story of Great civilizations on the continent of Africa, where great mathematicians, scientist, and leaders reigned. It is the story of a great people that was taken against their will, and some dropped off in the Caribbean and other areas. It is the story of an enslaved people that helped to build this country with free labor. It is the story of a people that had to persevere through Jim Crow Laws, and lead the Civil Rights Movement. It is the story of a people who have contributed to America through Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts, and Math. Not to mention Athletics. Yet still today our students as a whole are not taught African American history, but have to endure the pain of "Black Face", symbols of nooses, and the disrespect of the usage of the "N" Word. African American People have worked hard to overcome a great deal of pain and hate.

The more we know about one another, the more we can understand one another. The more we can understand one another, the more we can love one another. The more we love one another the greater our country will be. Please join me in supporting bill #7082 alone. Not combined with any other bill! All of our children will benefit from knowing African American History, because it is American History.

Sincerely,

Representative Bobby Gibson
15th District

