

I am writing to request that you give Senate Bill 364 an UNFAVORABLE report.

I live in Anne Arundel County. In fact, I live in Pasadena - Senator Simonaire's district. This is the land of Confederate flags and conspiracy theories. One conspiracy theory is that Critical Race Theory is being taught in the schools, yet the people who make such claims can't even explain what CRT is (Pasadena's own Board of Education representative also can't, but fundraised out of fear of it anyway.) It seems that Sen. Simonaire is more interested in entertaining those ignorant conspiracy theorists than in protecting the students from racism and anti-LGBTQ+ bias.

Please see this page where some students at Chesapeake High School in Pasadena share their stories about those experiences of bigotry:

<https://www.instagram.com/changeforchesapeake/>

I've watched many Anne Arundel County Board of Education meetings. They are swamped with work, including numerous Covid-related issues. And now Senator Simonaire wants to add additional work from a bunch of parents who don't have the faintest clue about what they're talking about? Having homeschooled his own children, Sen. Simonaire is perfectly aware of that option for parents who dislike that their children are learning about the histories of Black people or the Holocaust, and that they have to take the Global Citizenship course. <https://www.aacps.org/globalcitizenship>

And what would the county BOE do about state-mandated curriculum being challenged? Why should they have to take their time to consider whether to continue using it when they don't even have a choice in the matter?

We've seen throughout this country that states and schools are banning books, curriculum, and discussion because of their own racism, homophobia, and anti-Semitism. This shouldn't even be entertained.

What does Senator Simonaire mean in his bill when he specifies:

"WHEREAS, Parents and guardians of students attending public schools in Anne Arundel County demand the ability to appeal curriculum that is divisive, antipatriotic, age-inappropriate, explicitly sexual in nature, promotes radical ideology, or is harmful to the student's overall educational environment..."

Would that include teaching about chattel slavery, since it demonstrates that the United States hasn't always been just? Is such a claim "antipatriotic"?

What about teachers mentioning that Dr. King said:

"We must recognize that we can't solve our problem now until there is a radical redistribution

of economic and political power... this means a revolution of values and other things. We must see now that the evils of racism, economic exploitation and militarism are all tied together... you can't really get rid of one without getting rid of the others... the whole structure of American life must be changed. America is a hypocritical nation and [we] must put [our] own house in order."

- Report to SCLC Staff, May 1967.

Is that the sort of "radical ideology" that Sen. Simonaire is afraid of even mentioning? Would it only be permissible to talk about a whitewashed version of King's "I have a dream" speech, and nothing else?

Couldn't any discussion of current events be considered "divisive"?

"Explicitly sexual in nature"? What does that even mean? Is he talking about health class? Is he talking about having books about the existence of LGBTQ+ people on the shelves? Is he talking about James Baldwin and Bayard Rustin being gay, and the teachers better not say anything about it? Is he talking about "Maus"?

Is it Senator Simonaire's goal to erase the existence of people in this country, people throughout history, and even students in the schools?

Like I said, a number of people in Pasadena display Confederate flags. This includes one across the street from a middle school (a middle school that was named after a segregationist, by the way, yet many community members opposed the renaming of it because they didn't consider it a bad thing to have a school named after a segregationist.) Under this bill, Pasadena residents (and I'm sure others in the county) could petition the county BOE to stop teaching the truth about the Civil War. I've actually come across people here who call it "the war of northern aggression." Recently, a student wore a Confederate flag to Chesapeake High School. Is there any doubt that his parents encouraged that?

Entertaining the level of bigotry that this bill would welcome at public Board of Education meetings would be traumatic to many people in the student body. A bill that claims to protect children would actually lead to great harm.

Anne Arundel County has worked very hard the past few years to battle the bigotry within the schools. There have been numerous public meetings about addressing bigotry, and the schools have an Office of Equity and promote Culturally Responsive Teaching (not to be confused with Critical Race Theory.) Anne Arundel County schools have made great progress, and this bill could lead to a reversal of that.

Please give SB364 an Unfavorable report. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
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