

MARYLAND STUDENT COALITION

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WHY THE MSC SUPPORTS: SENATE BILL 116 - 2022

- 1.** The purpose of this bill is to reform current Maryland State English/Language Arts curricula in grades six through twelve in a cohesive and targeted manner statewide. Specifically, this bill pushes for the mandating of the substantive inclusion of racial minority, LGBT, and woman/gender non-conforming authors in the current literary requirements. Maryland students must be prepared to enter a workforce, environment, and world that is increasingly diverse along the lines of race, gender, and sexuality, among other classifications. Part of preparing Maryland students for such a future is introducing them to a broad and diverse array of perspectives through the literature they read, engage with, analyze, and are assessed on.
- 2.** This bill also seeks to redress the injustice of decades of underrepresentation of racial minorities, LGBT, and women/gender non-conforming authors in literature and curricula. This lack of representation and visibility is not only damaging to these communities but also minority students who find themselves unable to identify with the characters they are made to analyze and the authors whose books they have to read. Increasing inclusivity in literature increases minority student comfort in the classroom while also broadening the minds and perspectives of the entire student body.
- 3.** Nationwide there have been cries by students, of all backgrounds, for increasingly diversified literature and curricula in public education. This cause has also been taken up by students across Maryland including several counties' Student Members of the Board (SMOBs). While some counties in Maryland could be deemed more progressive, there are others that remain stagnant on the topic of curriculum reform and diversification. As a select

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few counties incorporate diversified curricula in the form of LGBTQ+ History courses, or diverse literature, others take little to no action in the same direction. Although this fact is entrenched in political and social views, the issue of the education of Maryland's students is not a political one. The application of such curriculum reform cannot be an inconsistent patchwork as it is now; rather students should be exposed to a breadth of perspectives and authorial backgrounds irrespective of what district they reside in. Quality diverse education cannot become a commodity accessible to the few.

4. To further the quality of a Maryland public school education, it is of the utmost importance that English/Language Arts curricula be diversified along the lines of authorial identity in a standardized and consistent manner. Thus, it is to this end that we the students of the State of Maryland advocate that the State of Maryland take the following actions:

- Recognize that the educational institutions of the State of Maryland should strive to highlight and promote diversity not only in their student populations but also in their curricula.
- Recognize the importance of increasing the visibility of marginalized groups including racial minorities, LGBT persons, and women/gender non-conforming peoples.
- Encourage or compell the Maryland State Department of Education and local Boards of Education to diversify English/Language Arts curricula through the introduction of required literature written by underrepresented authors.
- Recognizing the above is necessary for adequately preparing students of all backgrounds for their futures and for adequately providing imperative representation.