

I am writing today to express my opinions *against* SB 0364, the “Parent’s Right to Challenge Curriculum Act.” This bill is nothing more than an attempt to keep children from learning an accurate history of our country, or from learning beneficial, accurate information about health and sexuality.

I have a PhD in psychology professor, with a specialization in child development. In my expert opinion, I can tell you that when children feel left out of the school curriculum – such as when the school refuses to acknowledge their gender identity or sexual orientation, or that of their parents or loved ones – this increases the odds of both mental health problems and risky behaviors. Learning about LGBTQ+ people, or sharing information about birth control, or talking about healthy sexual relationships is not going to lead to risky behavior or a change in one’s gender identity or sexual orientation, any more than talking about seat belts leads people to stop wearing them.

In terms of history, this is not my area of professional expertise. However, as the White parent of three children in county schools (grades K, 4, and 6), I *want* my children to learn the full history of the US – the good, the bad, and the ugly. Proponents of this bill may talk about certain concepts as “divisive” or “unpatriotic,” but really they just mean “anything that challenges an idealistic view of the US as a happy place for all.” Well, it hasn’t been, and it isn’t now, and denying reality won’t change that. It is our civic and moral obligation to give teachers the tools and resources they need to help our children learn about and grapple with those ugly truths, as this is the only way that we can move forward and truly make Anne Arundel County a welcoming place for all. When my children get to be high school age, I would be proud if they were to choose the new African American history elective. What would make me even happier, though, is if that elective became unnecessary because African American history was interwoven into the standard curriculum.

I can understand why parents would want to know what their children are learning. I do too! That’s a healthy part of the educational process. But why would we give parents the right to randomly challenge the expertise of those teachers and educational leaders who have devoted their careers to learning and implementing best practices for our children, any more than we should have the right to randomly trigger investigations into county planners about the placement of traffic lights?

My last reason for opposing this bill is that it is clearly meant as an end run around the County Council, who already voted down a similar proposal. There is no other good reason for Senator Simonaire to waste the state legislature’s time on a bill that applies only to Anne Arundel County.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to oppose SB364.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Thank you,

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