

Dear Senate Committee on Education,

I am writing in opposition to SB 683. This bill appears to be an attempt to mandate a 1619 Project-type of curriculum in Oregon schools. As a parent of Oregon school children, I have seen the harm that such instruction can cause to children. After a lesson on racism in America, my elementary-age child came home and told us that he hates himself because he is white. While I'm sure this was not the teacher's intent, this was the message that was received. More concerning than this, however, is that such a strong emphasis on our racist past without an equal emphasis on the good of our nation and state's past and the hope for their future sends an even more harmful message to children of color- that their future has already been determined by our racist history, and that their lives are therefore without hope of improvement. Instilling helplessness and a victimhood mentality in our children is wrong. Dividing our communities based on immutable characteristics such as skin color is wrong. Let's please remember the words of Dr. Martin Luther King and judge people based on the content of their character and not by the color of their skin. SB 683 will harm our communities and especially children of color and of traditionally marginalized communities. Let's please expend our efforts in teaching children to love and respect all people, regardless of their skin color. Please do not harm the most vulnerable of our population by making them feel a victim of the past and powerless to do anything about it.

Thank you,  
Wendy Bennion