

Submitter: Zoe Piliafas
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General
Government, and Veterans
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2995

Chair Tran and members of the committee,

My name is Zoe Piliafas, and I am an educator based in Portland. I am testifying in support of HB 2995. I became a history teacher at 25 in North Carolina, and was handed a textbook that aligned with the state's curriculum standards. That book, like my own education, offered a sanitized version of American history—one that confined Black history to small, boxed-off sections, as if it were an afterthought. But those boxes became doorways. I started investigating them, I uncovered a history I had never been taught—one that reshaped my understanding of America.

At first, I was angry. Angry that no one had told me about the policies that bridged slavery, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement—the ones that shaped economic and social disparities still felt today. Now, 25 years later, I can only conclude that my education, and that textbook, were never meant to provide an in-depth analysis of American policy. To do so, might disrupt the comforting narrative that we are a land of equal opportunity, that our patriotism is built on a foundation of freedom for all.

But my uncovering hasn't stopped. Black Americans are still here—still striving, still pushing against the weight of history. Still trying to climb out of a hole that government policies dug.

And today, all that's being asked is to allow a study—an uncovering. Nothing more. If you vote no, I can only assume you fear what the data will reveal or that you simply do not care. But history is not just the past; it is the blueprint that shapes our present and future. As citizens, we have a right to understand how policies affect people's ability to thrive. More than that, we have a responsibility to seek justice, to demand fairness.

Cowards look away. You have a choice: to cower from discovery or to embrace curiosity. This moment is yours. Will you be brave, or will you resist?