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June 8, 2022

Colorado State Board of Education  
Angelika Schroeder, Chair  
201 E. Colfax Ave, Room 500  
Denver, CO 80203

Re: Inclusion Of American Minorities In Teaching Civil Government

Dear Chairwoman Schroeder,

The Colorado Democratic Latino Caucus, the Black Democratic Legislative Caucus of Colorado, the Colorado Legislative LGBTQ Caucus, and the Democratic Women's Caucus of Colorado are comprised of forty-five Latino, Black, LGBTQ, and women state legislators who proudly serve in the Colorado General Assembly ensuring the needs of Colorado's diverse communities are reflected in state policy. We write to share our concerns about the Colorado Department of Education's Standards Review and Revision Process as it relates to the Social Studies Standards.

In 2019, the Colorado General Assembly and the Governor of Colorado enacted HB19-1192, Inclusion of American Minorities in Teaching Civil Government, into law. This legislation clearly outlined: "The history and civil government of the United States and the State of Colorado, which includes the history, culture, and social contributions of minorities, including, but not limited to, the American Indians, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender individuals within these minority groups, and the intersectionality of significant social and cultural features within these communities, and the contributions and persecution of religious minorities, must be taught in all the public schools of the state."<sup>1</sup>

The History, Culture, Social Contributions, and Civil Government in Education Commission, hereby after referred to as the "Commission," established with the passage of HB19-1192 was tasked with making recommendations to the Colorado State Board of Education that "seek to further the discovery, interpretation, and learning of the history, culture, social contributions, and civil government of the United States and Colorado, including the contributions of American

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<sup>1</sup> [https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2019a\\_1192\\_signed.pdf](https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/2019a_1192_signed.pdf)

Indians, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender individuals within these minority groups, and the intersectionality of significant social and cultural features within these communities, and the contributions and persecution of religious minorities.”

Furthermore, HB19-1192, specifically states: “In adopting revisions to the standards related to history and civics, the state board shall take into consideration any recommendations provided by the history, culture, social contributions, and civil government in education commission.”

It has been brought to our attention, however, that the recommendations provided by this Commission to meet the requirements of HB19-1192 have faced inappropriate, political editorializing, and concerning feedback from certain members of the Colorado State Board of Education.

A few examples of this feedback include comments such as:

- “Gender Identity is inappropriate for 1st graders,” a response to the following first grade History Evidence Outcomes: "Identify similarities and differences between themselves and others. For example: Race, ethnicity, gender identity, religion, ability, and family makeup."
- “The continual and exhausting attempts to include various historically marginalized groups should be eliminated. It's such a trite and ineffective attempt to be inclusive. By trying to list every group, you will inevitably leave a group out and you have done exactly that (such as ignoring women). Better to refrain from lists of groups.”
- “Does this include protesting?,” a response to the following fourth grade Civics Colorado Essential Skill: “Participate in social or community activities.”
- “Is it? Or is this a teacher’s perspective?,” a response to the following fifth grade History Inquiry Question: “Why is it important to understand and empathize with the perspectives of diverse groups?”<sup>2</sup>

This type of feedback from certain members of the Colorado State Board of Education has resulted in the omission of multiple recommendations by the Commission to include the history, culture, and social contributions of specific groups including Latino, American Indian, African American, Asian Americans, and LGBTQ Americans in the June 2022 version of the Social Studies Colorado Academic Standards Recommendations.

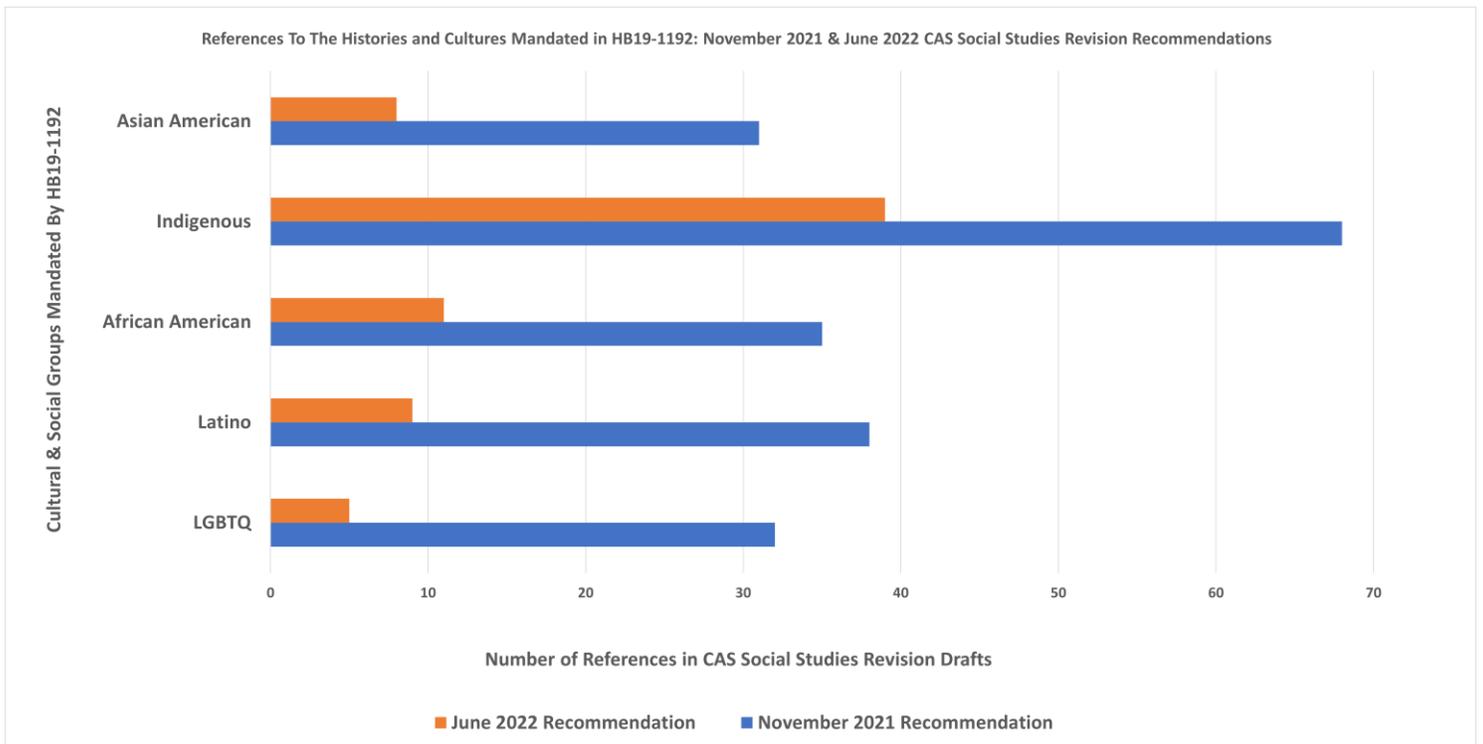
In the original recommendation made in November 2021, the Commission also recommended that the concept of race be included in preschool standards, the concept of gender identity be included in first grade standards, and teachings about the history, culture, and social

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/committeesresponsetoboardmemberrankin>

contributions of specific groups including African Americans, Latinos, American Indians, Asian Americans, and LGBTQ Americans be included in lessons starting in the first grade. However, **all** references to race, gender identity, and specific social, ethnic, and cultural groups prior to the fourth grade have been omitted from the June 2022 recommendation. These changes impede the Commission’s expertise in education, child development, child comprehension of social studies at each grade level, and circumvent the intended legislative impact of HB19-1192.

The Commission, composed of experts in social studies and active educators, appropriately followed the legal framework in HB19-1192 when the original recommendation to the Colorado State Board of Education was submitted in November 2021. However, between the initial November 2021 recommendation and the final June 2022 recommendation made by the Commission, the number of references to the history, culture, and social contributions of social and cultural groups required by HB19-1192 decreased drastically:



*References counted from November 2021 draft<sup>3</sup> and June 2022 draft.<sup>4</sup>*

This significant decrease in the number of references to the history, culture, and social contributions of American Indian, Asian American, Latino, African American, and LGBTQ Americans between the original November 2021 recommendation and the June 2022

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/socialstudiesrevisionrecommendationsnov-21>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction/recommendedrevisionforsocialstudiesmay22>

recommendation boldly thwarts the legislative intent of HB19-1192 as well as the authority given to the Commission.

As legislators, we wholeheartedly value public feedback in the process of creating public education standards, including the recommendations made by the Commission. Online public feedback on the Draft Social Studies Standards Revisions between November 2021 to February 2022 overwhelmingly indicated agreement - over 65 percent - with the recommendations proposed by the Commission in November 2021.<sup>5</sup> Given the requirements of HB19-1192 and the widespread public support of the November 2021 Commission recommendations, there was no need for revisions to the original recommendation. We ask that the Colorado State Board of Education honor the original recommendations made by the Commission in November 2021 and adopt these recommendations as the new Social Studies Colorado Academic Standards.

As legislators and members of the Latino, Black, LGBTQ, and Women's caucuses we know firsthand the impact these standards will have on our Colorado communities and the acceptance and celebration of diversity and inclusion in our state. HB19-1192 was enacted into law to encourage the discovery and interpretation of multiple histories, cultures, and social contributions of the diverse people - Latino, Asian Americans, African Americans, American Indians, and LGBTQ Americans - who have lived and continue to live and contribute to Colorado and the United States. This bill received bipartisan support by sixty-four members of the Colorado General Assembly. We strongly believe it is our responsibility to reiterate the legislative intent of HB19-1192 and reinforce the authority of the History, Culture, Social Contributions, and Civil Government in Education Commission and its original recommendations to the Social Studies Colorado Academic Standards Revisions.

Sincerely,

Colorado Democratic Latino Caucus  
Black Democratic Legislative Caucus of Colorado  
Colorado Legislative LGBTQ Caucus  
Democratic Women's Caucus of Colorado  
Hon. Bri Buentello, HB19-1192 Prime Sponsor

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<sup>5</sup> [https://go.boarddocs.com/co/cde/Board.nsf/files/CD6KHU51FFFD/\\$file/Social%20Studies%20Standards%20Review%20Presentation%20April%202022.pdf](https://go.boarddocs.com/co/cde/Board.nsf/files/CD6KHU51FFFD/$file/Social%20Studies%20Standards%20Review%20Presentation%20April%202022.pdf)