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LDF, Project Say Something, and Alabama NAACP Urge Alabama Department of Education to Reject Proposed Anti-Truth Law

Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), Project Say Something, and the Alabama NAACP State Conference submitted testimony to the Alabama Department of Education (ALDOE) in opposition to the proposed codification of the Resolution Declaring the Preservation of Intellectual Freedom and Non-Discrimination—a vaguely worded, overly broad, and hastily implemented attack on free speech which risks suppressing truthful discussions about race, gender, and United States history in Alabama’s classrooms.

The organizations submitted oral and written testimony at an ALDOE hearing where members of the public were given the opportunity to express their opposition to the resolution, which the Alabama State Board of Education (BOE) immediately enacted last August through emergency rulemaking. The testimony explains how the resolution conflicts with the state’s own academic standards and may suppress the speech rights of Alabama teachers by:

- prohibiting the teaching of concepts that supposedly “impute fault, blame, a tendency to oppress, or the need to feel guilt or anguish to persons solely because of their race or sex”
- banning any trainings or teachings that “believe fault, blame, or bias should be assigned to a race or sex”
- presenting an ahistorical narrative that “slavery and racism are betrayals of the founding principles of the United States, including freedom, equality, justice, and humanity,” though slavery and racism are in fact key components of this nation’s founding.

“Rather than addressing the persistent issues plaguing Alabama’s public education system, including a long-standing achievement gap between Black students and white students and increased barriers to learning caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the state Board of Education has instead hastened an extraordinary resolution that could distort the teaching of American history by denying a past rooted in white supremacy and disregarding the viewpoints and experiences of those who have been victimized by individual and structural inequalities,” said Hamida Labi, Policy Counsel at LDF.

“Not only is the resolution ahistorical and antithetical to the goal of providing a quality and inclusive education to future generations of Alabamians, its overly broad and vague language also fails to clearly articulate which — if any — discussions dealing with race or gender are permissible in the classroom,” said Katrina Feldkamp, LDF Education Fellow. “The obvious effect is the chilling of speech of both educators and students. The State Board of Education is charged with ensuring that educators to do their jobs effectively and that

Alabama students receive a quality of education; yet by these most recent actions, the Board jeopardizes both of these important goals.”

The testimony to ALDOE outlined the importance of students having a full and accurate understanding of American history, particularly the enslavement of Black people and the systemic subjugation of Black people and other people of color, women, LGBTQ individuals, and marginalized communities in Alabama and across the nation.

“Accurate and inclusive teaching benefits everyone,” said Camille Bennet, founder of Project Say Something, an Alabama-based organization that uses communication and education to reconcile the past with the present and address racial injustice. “Contrary to concerns about students feeling ‘guilt or anguish,’ while carrying out our work in classrooms across the state, we have personally witnessed students of all races engaging positively in thoughtful discussions about slavery and racism in Alabama and the United States. The ALDOE should encourage and nurture these conversations, not suppress them.”

“There is no question that this ideologically extreme resolution, which was shoddily drafted and poorly conceived, lacks merit,” said Alabama State NAACP President Benard Simelton. “If passed, the codification of this resolution will not only disadvantage Alabama’s children by saddling them with a substandard education but also spread distrust of the education system throughout the state. This is certainly not in the interest of Alabama students, and it should not be in the interest of the Alabama Board of Education.”

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization. LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).