



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1415-2017, **Version:** A

Res. No. 1415-A

Resolution calling upon the New York State Education Department to convene a task force to assess the cultural relevance of state learning standards across subject areas in elementary, middle and high school and explore the grounding of standards in core content that challenges racism, ableism and sexism, and is LGBTQ and TGNC-affirming

By Council Members Palma, the Speaker (Council Member Mark-Viverito), Levin, Menchaca, Barron, Dromm, Cohen, Chin, Rose, Levine, Reynoso, Treyger, Rosenthal and Kallos

Whereas, Research shows that people of color, people with disabilities, women and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer or questioning (LGBQ) and transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) are vastly underrepresented in education curriculum; and

Whereas, For example, according to the National Education Association (NEA), education textbooks are often dominated by White history and perspectives, which causes many students of color to disengage from academic learning; and

Whereas, Furthermore, the NEA acknowledges that African Americans, the second most represented racial group in school textbooks, appear in limited references and are mainly included in history lessons in relationship to slavery; and

Whereas, According to the NEA, Asian Americans and Latinos appear in school textbooks as if they have no history or contemporary ethnic experiences; and

Whereas, New York City public schools serve a diverse population of students, and according to the New York City Department of Education (DOE), 40.5 percent of students are Hispanic, 27.1 percent are Black, 15.5 percent are Asian and 14.8 percent are White; and

Whereas, According to the NEA, school textbooks incorporate limited information about contemporary

race relations, racial issues and racism, and therefore are not encouraging students to think critically about racism; and

Whereas, According to the NEA, minimal attention to racism results in students perceiving racism as an issue from the past rather than an ongoing problem; and

Whereas, According to the Disability Studies Quarterly, individuals with disabilities, one of the largest minority groups in America, are also underrepresented in school textbooks and curricula despite the fact that they have made significant contributions to our history; and

Whereas, Research shows that students with disabilities are disproportionately victims of bullying in comparison to their able-bodied peers; and

Whereas, According to the DOE, students with disabilities represent 18.7 percent of DOE's student population, although the DOE does not separately track students with physical disabilities only; and

Whereas, Advocates acknowledge that the more able-bodied students learn about the experiences of students with disabilities, the more they will embrace students with disabilities; and

Whereas, According to Ed Change, there is a gender-biased curriculum in schools that is unfair to girls, and that gender bias is taught implicitly in classrooms; and

Whereas, Research shows that textbooks often portray women in stereotypical roles such as homemakers, while men are significantly represented as politicians, scientists, engineers and law enforcement; and

Whereas, According to DOE, female students represent 48.6 percent of the student population; and

Whereas, Numerous reports show that discriminatory gender norms and practices in textbooks can negatively impact the way girls engage in school, and the underrepresentation of girls in textbooks can negatively impact their self-esteem; and

Whereas, Research reveals that LGBQ and TGNC students are also underrepresented in school curricula; and

Whereas, According to a survey conducted by the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network (GLSEN), only 22.4 percent of LGBT and queer students reported being taught a positive representation of LGBT history, events and people in school, and 17.9 percent reported being taught negative content about LGBT topics in school; and

Whereas, According to GLSEN's school climate report, 85.2 percent of LGBT and queer students were verbally harassed at school based on personal characteristics and 27 percent of LGBT and queer students were physically harassed in the previous year because of their sexual orientation; and

Whereas, Advocates argue that positive representations of LGBT history and events contribute to creating a more welcoming school climate for LGBT students; and

Whereas, Numerous advocacy groups argue that the curricula in New York City schools lacks cultural relevance for many students and their experiences are underrepresented; and

Whereas, Research shows that educators are often unaware of their own biased teaching behaviors; and

Whereas, Additionally, fostering critical thinking is one of the DOE's central values, but it is unknown to what extent school curricula is fostering students to challenge racism, ableism and sexism; and

Whereas, New York City is one of the most diverse cities in the world and champions diversity, tolerance and inclusion of all individuals, and it is imperative that we encourage students to respect, accept and learn about people with different identities; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Education Department to convene a task force to assess the cultural relevance of state learning standards across subject areas in elementary, middle and high school, and explore the grounding of standards in core content that challenges racism, ableism and sexism, and is LGBQ and TGNC-affirming.

LS# 9211, 9653
5/25/17
KJ/SMD