

I am writing in opposition of HB781. It is unreasonable to say that we must avoid "divisive concepts" in schools, more specifically in history and literature classes, because it leads to the silencing of perspectives, the omission of truth, and the disregard for the human experience. Let us first explore two areas that are the focus of this bill: English and social studies/history/government courses. History: These standards already include gaining an understanding of the parts and functions of government. To gain a better understanding of historical events and their impacts, multiple perspectives must be studied objectively. An accomplished, effective teacher provides the information and allows students to come to their own conclusions after critical thinking and exploration. No teacher is actively making students feel shame based upon actions in the past. This may have found its way into the bill because of what is found on social media regarding the content of certain creators. How the author of this bill connected it to schools and curriculum is baffling. English: It is also clear that this bill was written from a place of ignorance as to what goes into the creation of literature. In the study of literature, we discuss WHY a text was created. Throughout history great literature has come from time of conflict because this is how the authors process the experiences and events. To eliminate a text because of what can arbitrarily be considered a "divisive concept" is a form of censorship. Based on this bill, ANYTHING that someone has an objection to can be considered a "divisive concept." An accomplished, effective English teacher provides students with multiple perspectives through the application of critical thinking skills as they study fiction and non-fiction texts that came from various historical periods. Classes discuss the impacts from multiple perspectives to consider how different groups processed what was happening during the time period. If you explore the standards for English courses, students are taught to think critically and reflect on issues relating to various facets of society including, but not limited to political struggles, gender equality, and civil rights. I am guessing that these would be considered "divisive concepts." Banning these is silencing truth.

The idea that all curriculum materials must be made available by July 1 clearly shows a lack of understanding of how reading material selection and lesson development works. Could we provide the major texts? Yes. An accomplished, effective English teacher designs their curriculum by getting to know their students when school starts and adjusting their curriculum to address the students' needs and interests. They also constantly look for relevant, new texts that can help provide a variety of perspectives. If the creator of this bill is so concerned for parent involvement, did they consider that schools hold open house nights before school starts? This is where concerned parents can find out the major texts and topics covered in the course. I feel as if the bill does not consider that parents can reach out to their child's teacher at any time. I find it interesting that one of the Federalist papers mentioned in the bill is one that warns of the dangers of allowing the values of the majority to represent what is good for everyone. This bill, if enacted, will actualize this warning and hinder the recognition and representation of the minority. This bill talks about treating everyone equally, but in order to do that you have to recognize everyone's lived experiences. Some of those people and experiences probably be considered a "divisive concept" to the creators/supporters of this bill. It's extremely contradictory.