

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 24, 2024

The Honorable Richard Woods  
State School Superintendent  
Georgia Department of Education  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Dr. SE  
Atlanta, GA, 30334

Dear Superintendent Woods,

We write to urge the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) convene educators, experts and relevant stakeholders to develop and implement uniform standards for Georgia's Introduction to African American/Black Studies course. The introductory elective course is distinctly important to Georgia where 33% of residents identify as Black or African American.<sup>1</sup> We also urge you to ensure all students have equal access to enroll in the diversity elective courses, regardless of where they may reside or the size of their school.

As you know, the Introduction to African American/Black Studies course has been in the catalogue of state-funded courses since 2020. While we were excited to see the adoption of additional social studies diversity course offerings, we have considerable concern regarding the lack of standards associated with teaching the class material. For example, the course description focuses on exploring the culture, history, art, accomplishments, and the march towards societal and political equality through various disciplinary lenses as they relate to the lives of African Americans and Black Americans in the United States.<sup>2</sup> However, GaDOE does not require nor provide any specialized training for educators to access in order to teach the course.

Supplemental training for educators not only improves the quality of instruction, but also improves student outcomes. Clayton County Public Schools (CCPS) for example, provides training to educators on how to facilitate difficult conversations—an important skill when discussing sensitive topics like race and politics. CCPS offers educators a short but rigorous certification timeline that focuses on developing a comprehensive understanding of the culture, history, contributions, and shared experiences of Black Americans in Georgia and throughout our history. GaDOE could consider certification options through the Educator Certification Division of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) to assist districts that don't offer comparable trainings.

---

<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau. 2023, July 17. *Georgia: 2020 Census*. <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/georgia-population-change-between-census-decade.html>

<sup>2</sup> GaDOE SuitCASE. *State-Funded List of K-8 Subjects and 9-12 Courses*. <https://case.georgiastandards.org/6345e226-252d-11eb-966e-0242ac140004/e38aa67c-0d45-42d0-9feb-48632349d722/1024>

Additionally, school districts and educators are provided with little to no guidance as to which instructional materials, textbooks, or supplemental resources could be utilized to develop a stronger curriculum. The result is often a wide discrepancy in the rigor and content of how the course is taught between school districts. We are concerned with this is presenting a barrier to rural and low-income districts that would like to offer the Introduction to African American/Black Studies elective course but have no available teachers or the necessary resources to develop new curriculum and the materials to teach.

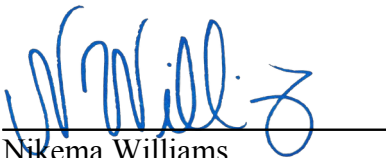
While we are pleased that you ultimately reversed the decision to not approve the AP African American Studies course, the ensuing confusion prevented some schools from offering the course this fall following a successful pilot program designation during the 2023-2024 school year. This may have interfered with students' ability to enroll and complete the course and earn the required credits to qualify for the Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) scholarship. We ask that you utilize all available GaDOE resources to assist school districts in offering the AP African American Studies course and ensure students receive full credit toward HOPE academic requirements.

As Superintendent, you are in an important position to strengthen educational opportunities for students in every corner of our state. We thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



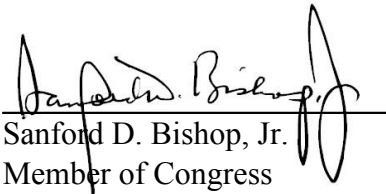
David Scott  
Member of Congress



Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress