

Wilmington, Delaware
July 9, 2020

#4841

Sponsor:

**Council
President
Shabazz**

WHEREAS, the teaching of history and social studies in the United States is a fundamental path toward understanding the intricacies of culture, lived experiences, and our path forward as a nation; and

WHEREAS, scholars have consistently shown that history helps us understand ourselves, other people, how the society we live in came to be, contributes to moral understanding, and provides identity and self-worth relevant to where each of us fits into the story of the country we live in and have helped to develop; and

WHEREAS, the mis-teaching of such important subjects can have far-reaching, deleterious effects on students' understanding of society, themselves, and each other; and

WHEREAS, Euro-Centrism and Anglo-American Exceptionalism have seeped into public school curriculums, evident in the oversizing of the United States and Europe in world maps, standards requiring enslaved African and African-American persons be referred to as workers, African nations depicted as primitive, and embargoes on the discussion of Japanese internment and American war crimes; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, the Southern Poverty Law Center conducted online surveys of 1,000 American high-school seniors, more than 1,700 social studies teachers, 10 commonly used U.S. History textbooks, and 15 sets of state standards to assess what students know, what educators teach, what publishers include, and what standards exist regarding the teaching of American slavery; and

WHEREAS, this study revealed that Among 12th-graders, only 8% could identify slavery as the cause of the Civil War; only 32% correctly named the 13th Amendment as the

constitutional amendment that ended slavery in the United States; and fewer than 50% could identify the “Middle Passage” as the transport of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean from various unnamed African nations to North America; and

WHEREAS, the experiences of Indigenous and other People of Color were found to be severely misrepresented when covered at all; and

WHEREAS, history textbook analyses since 1934 (Reddick), notably those conducted in 1969 and 2015, evidence a lack of attention and accuracy given to Black History pre- and- post the enslavement of Africans and the centuries of third-class citizenship of African-Americans in U.S. society legally, educationally, economically and civically; and

WHEREAS, numerous educational organizations, including but not limited to the American Association of School Librarians, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the National Council for the Social Studies are committed to critically engaging in discourse about curriculums.

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON

that the Council strongly recommends the establishment of a Commission dedicated to supporting scholarly and accurate histories of African Americans, Native Indigenous and other Persons of Color in the United States within the textbooks used in Delaware public schools in social studies and history courses, in grades K through 12. The Commission shall:

1. Determine what textbooks are currently being used in grades K through 12 in social studies and history courses in Delaware public schools that present the histories of these people of color in the United States.
2. Determine the accuracy of scholarly representation of the historical narratives representing the cultures, contributions to society, and struggles of African-

Americans, and other people of color such as Native Indigenous, and First Nation peoples, Latino and Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans in textbooks currently used in grades K through 12 in Delaware public schools.

3. Determine where current textbooks are insufficient in the scholarly and accurate portrayal of the histories, cultures, contributions and struggles of these people of color to be recognized fully as human beings, American U.S. citizens and contributing members of U.S. society in medicine, law, fields of science, the economy, scholarship, arts and culture.
4. Make such determinations by consulting with and/or reviewing the recommendations of curricula professional associations that advise and provide research to public school districts serving grades K through 12 on textbooks that present accurate, scholarly, historic and social narratives about these diverse groups of American people of color.
5. Recommend replacing textbooks currently being used in any or all K through 12 social studies and history courses and classes taught in Delaware public schools found to be insufficient and/or inaccurate regarding American people of color with textbooks recommended from the curricula professional associations that meet the criterion sought of presenting and teaching accurate and scholarly historic and social narratives of African-Americans and all People of Color in U.S. American society.

Passed by City Council,

Attest: _____
City Clerk

SYNOPSIS: Numerous organizations have identified disparities between the past experiences and lived realities of African American, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Communities in the United States and the teaching of their histories and cultures; their scientific, economic, educational contributions; and their political and legal struggles for equal and equitable U.S. citizenship in Delaware public school textbooks and curriculums. For this reason, the Wilmington City Council strongly recommends the creation of a Commission by the Delaware Department of Education that will identify inaccuracies and misrepresentations of African Americans, Blacks, Native Indigenous, Latinos and Hispanics, and Asian U.S. Persons of Color in Delaware public school K through 12 history and social studies courses, especially those contained within textbooks, and make recommendations for both curriculum and teaching material changes.