

**Joint Statement on the Ohio State Board of Education's
October 14, 2021, Vote to Rescind the 2020 Resolution to Condemn
Racism and to Advance Equity and Opportunity for Black Students,
Indigenous Students and Students of Color**

On Behalf of Members:
Dr. Christina Collins, District 5
Meryl Johnson, District 11
Dr. Antoinette Miranda, District 6
Michelle Newman, District 9

In the midst of an historical moment in July 2020 following the murder of George Floyd, the Ohio State Board of Education took the courageous step of confronting racism with a 12-5 vote for the Resolution to Condemn Racism and to Advance Equity and Opportunity for Black Students, Indigenous Students and Students of Color. This Resolution made strong statements by:

- Drawing attention to decades of achievement data highlighting vast disparities between People of Color and their White peers,
- Praising culturally responsive curriculum for empowering all students, and
- Condemning systemic inequities that have prevented members of marginalized groups from prosperity.

The power of the Resolution, however, lay in its action steps. It asked staff of the Ohio Department of Education and members of the Board to:

- Reflect and examine their beliefs,
- Participate in implicit bias training, and
- Examine standards and model curriculum for bias and ensure racism and the struggle for equality are adequately taught.

Equally as important, it recommended that local districts look intentionally at their own practices, including an internal examination of curriculum, hiring practices, staff development, and student discipline.

As the “Candidates for Educational Equity,” we campaigned on this Resolution and passionately agreed with its message, but it drew ire from vocal groups almost immediately and was quickly hijacked into a larger political conversation around the infiltration of “Critical Race Theory” and “oppression of White kids” in education. To be clear, both are fictionalized and sensationalized visions of classroom instruction and presume professional educators cannot possibly teach difficult topics in ways that are fair and balanced. As board member Erik Poklar pointed out, *nowhere* in the Resolution is *any* of this mentioned. In fact, no one who has complained about

the Resolution has used its actual text to make their complaints. But these facts did not stop the dissidents.

Since last Fall, much has changed. At the State Board, all members are feeling political pressures to remove the “CRT” boogeyman from curricula, and the pressure finally met its boiling point. On Wednesday, October 14, 2021, in a 10-7 vote, the Board voted to rescind the Resolution to Condemn Racism and to Advance Equity and Opportunity for Black Students, Indigenous Students and Students of Color. The four authors of this letter voted against this action.

We have heard from teachers and administrators across the state. While they have always had full plates, now there’s a pandemic to manage, increasing performance disparities with our most vulnerable students, increased mental health and wellness issues. To make their jobs even more difficult, our state government seems to want to pick the very words, phrases, and ideas that a teacher can use in the classroom. How are teachers even able to use their skills and craft to fully and honestly *teach*?

We hear the exhaustion and frustration of dedicated professionals who were drawn by a calling to help children and now just feel defeated and frustrated. School board meetings across the state have become political battlefields with some of those serving having the safety of themselves and their families threatened. Our state already faces a teacher shortage, and we acknowledge a pending staffing crisis.

This is one of the most trying times in education for our communities. We call on our legislators to hear our teachers, our superintendents, and most importantly our students on what they find to be the most pressing issues in education today. Too much time is being spent on appeasing adult fears and fictionalized monsters and too little is being done to truly help our students succeed.