

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, STRONGLY CONDEMNING ALL EFFORTS BY THE STATE OF FLORIDA TO PROHIBIT, REWRITE, DISTORT, OR MANIPULATE HISTORICAL EVENTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE RELATED TO THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY, AND SLAVERY AND THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK AMERICANS, IN EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS AND CURRICULA; AND ENCOURAGING THE MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS TO INCORPORATE DIVERSE AND HISTORICALLY ACCURATE PERSPECTIVES INTO THEIR SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSES, INCLUDING THE EXPERIENCES OF ENSLAVED INDIVIDUALS, ABOLITIONISTS, AND THE BROADER CONTEXT OF THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS, TO THE FULLEST EXTENT PERMITTED BY LAW.

WHEREAS, since 2021, Florida Legislation has passed an alarming number of bills imposing certain ideological agendas on public schools, rewriting history, stifling free expression and stoking the flames of intolerance; and

WHEREAS, particularly, the topics of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as race and history of chattel slavery in the U.S. has been subject to significant censorship and revision; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, Governor Ron DeSantis signed the “Parental Rights in Education” bill, more commonly known as “Don’t Say Gay” bill, which prohibited “classroom discussion about sexual orientation or gender identity in certain grade levels”; and

WHEREAS, the Don’t Say Gay law has been since expanded via Bill 1069 during the 2023 Legislative Session to include prekindergarten to eighth grade in its restrictions, and prohibit students and employees alike in K-12 public schools from providing any pronoun that doesn’t correspond with their assigned “sex” at birth, among other changes; and

WHEREAS, in August 2023, vagueness and broadness of the “Don’t Say Gay” bill lead to chaos and confusion, as College Board, responsible for administering Advanced Placement (“AP”) classes and exams in high schools, released a statement that Florida Department of Education has effectively banned AP Psychology in the state by instructing Florida superintendents that teaching foundational content on sexual orientation and gender identity is illegal under state law; and

WHEREAS, this led to Education Commissioner Manny Díaz Jr. to inform Florida superintendents that the course could be taught “in its entirety in a manner that is age and developmentally appropriate; “and

WHEREAS, as a result, Miami-Dade County Superintendent Jose Dotres stated that Miami-Dade County public schools will continue to offer the AP Psychology course to students in its entirety; and

WHEREAS, in September 2023, the Miami-Dade School Board (the "School Board") will consider a proposal sponsored by School Board member Lucia Baez Geller, to recognize October as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer ("LGBTQ") History Month; and

WHEREAS, after the School Board's disappointing decision to reject a similar proposal by Baez-Geller to recognize October 2022 as LGBTQ History Month, the Mayor and City Commission urge the School Board to correct its prior failure, recognize October 2023 as LGBTQ History Month, and stand in solidarity with its LGBTQ students; and

WHEREAS, in 2022, Florida Legislation was adopted, and Governor Ron DeSantis signed, a new law, known as "Stop Wrongs Against Our Kids and Employees Act" or the "Stop W.O.K.E. Act," which prohibits instruction that could prompt students to feel discomfort about a historical event because of their race, ethnicity, sex or national origin; and

WHEREAS, the Stop W.O.K.E. Act has been used by the Florida Board of Education in its decision to reject Advanced Placement ("AP") African-American Studies curriculum from being offered in Florida schools, stating that it violated state law and was "significantly" lacking in educational value; and

WHEREAS, the Stop W.O.K.E. Act has since been challenged in federal courts, and the state has been enjoined from enforcing it, pending the outcome of litigation; and

WHEREAS, the state also barred lessons about "The 1619 Project," a New York Times project that reexamines U.S. history by placing the consequences of slavery and contributions of Black Americans at the center; and

WHEREAS, in addition to rejecting AP course on African-American studies, on July 19, 2023, the Florida Board of Education approved new social studies standards, which includes revised language setting forth how skills learned by enslaved people could supposedly be used for their "benefit"; and

WHEREAS, the new standard represents an old, racist, and revisionist argument that slavery was sometimes a benevolent institution that benefited the enslaved people, and portrays Africans as if they had no skills prior to being kidnapped from their homelands and trafficked to the Americas, when, in reality, it was Africans' skills in cultivating tobacco, sugar and rice that proved beneficial to the enslavers and built the inordinate wealth of the United States; and

WHEREAS, in 2023, Florida also became the first state to approve the use of videos in its classrooms produced by the Prager University Foundation, a media company producing videos to “promote American values,” according to its website, which is a well-known dog whistle for white supremacy; and

WHEREAS, one Prager video depicts slavery abolitionist Frederick Douglass saying that while slavery was wrong and evil, it was a compromise the Founding Fathers had to make to “achieve something great...”; and

WHEREAS, Marvin Dunn, a psychology professor emeritus at Florida International University, has authored several books on the history of African Americans, and perfectly captures why there was no upside to slavery that applied to the enslaved: “most enslaved people had no special skills at all that benefited them following their enslavement.... An enslaved man who was made to be a blacksmith might have been a king had he not been captured and taken from his country. Is he supposed to be grateful? Enslavement prevented people from becoming who and what they might have been and that was slavery's greatest injury to humankind.”; and

WHEREAS, under its current leadership, the state of Florida has engaged in an all-out attack on Black Americans, accurate Black history, voting rights, members of the LGBTQ+ community, immigrants, women's reproductive rights, and free speech, while simultaneously embracing a culture of fear, bullying, and intimidation by public officials; and

WHEREAS, the state’s continued aggressive attempts to erase Black history and to restrict diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in Florida schools resulted in NAACP Board of Directors issuing a formal travel advisory for the state of Florida, stating that “Florida is openly hostile toward African Americans, people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals. Before traveling to Florida, please understand that the state of Florida devalues and marginalizes the contributions of, and the challenges faced by African Americans and other communities of color.”; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Commission strongly condemn the Florida Board of Education’s recent revision of social studies standards regarding the history of slavery, and any attempt to highlight a “positive” upside to slavery, which risks perpetuating a distorted view of history that undermines the legacy of suffering and resilience of enslaved people; and

WHEREAS, it is important to note that Florida’s state standards are guidelines for teachers and for school districts to use them as baseline to develop their own curricula, and add more context; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor and City Commission encourage the Miami-Dade County Public Schools to incorporate diverse and historically accurate perspectives into their social studies classes, including the experiences of enslaved individuals, abolitionists,

and the broader context of the struggle for civil rights, to the fullest extent permitted by law; and

WHEREAS, education plays a crucial role in shaping the perspectives of future generations and must be grounded in accurate and ethical representation of historical events; and

WHEREAS, we must acknowledge the historical injustices faced by marginalized communities and to teach the next generation about the struggles and contributions of Black Americans in shaping the nation; and

WHEREAS, providing our younger generations with accurate portrayal of history and full understanding of the past will help prevent the suppression or distortion of information, which can further perpetuate harmful stereotypes and systemic inequalities; and

WHEREAS, by acknowledging this painful past, we can better understand the suffering and resilience of those who endured slavery, and their descendants who faced and continue to face generations of discrimination and marginalization.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT DULY RESOLVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA, that the Mayor and City Commission hereby strongly condemn all efforts by the state of Florida to prohibit, rewrite, distort, or manipulate historical events, particularly those related to the LGBTQ community, and slavery and the experiences of Black Americans, in educational materials and curricula; and encourage the Miami-Dade County Public Schools to incorporate diverse and historically accurate perspectives into their social studies classes, including the experiences of enslaved individuals, abolitionists, and the broader context of the struggle for civil rights, to the fullest extent permitted by law.

PASSED and ADOPTED this _____ day of _____, 2023.


ATTEST:

Dan Gelber
Mayor

Rafael E. Granado
City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO
FORM & LANGUAGE
& FOR EXECUTION

(sponsored by Mayor Dan Gelber)



City Attorney

9-6-23

Date