

March 11, 2024

Dear Senators Green, Quirmbach, and Rozenboom:

We are writing on behalf of social studies educators in Iowa who have alerted the National Council for the Social Studies (“NCSS”) that you are considering the revision of K-12 social studies standards and curriculum, as outlined in HF 2544 which was passed by the House of Representatives on Wednesday, February 28, 2024. ***We urge you not to pass this bill as the basis for K-12 social studies standards and curriculum in Iowa.***

NCSS knows that Iowa has a strong K-12 education system with high-quality learning standards and multiple pathways to prepare all students for college, career, and civic life. Additionally, NCSS counts among its own leaders and active members many qualified and dedicated Iowa educators. NCSS is proud of its state affiliate, the Iowa Council for the Social Studies, for its leadership, service, and support to Iowa teachers.

According to their statement, “The Iowa Council for the Social Studies recognizes the need to improve social studies education in Iowa. With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 and the Iowa Legislature’s decision to require testing in literacy, math, and science and mandate a 90-minute block of literacy every day in the Elementary grades, social studies was pushed to the margins of the elementary day. ICSS has heard from teachers across the state that social studies is the last 15 minutes of the day, done if there is time, not important because it’s not tested, or not done at this grade level. We are in our second generation of elementary students who do not consistently receive social studies education in our elementary schools. And now, every new elementary teacher themselves is the product of this marginalization. HF 2544 does not recognize, much less, address this issue.”

We agree with the Iowa Council for the Social Studies in its statement that “HF 2544 also represents another attack on the professionalism of Iowa teachers. The portions of this legislation that should legitimately be included in a U.S. History course or civics or government are already being included where appropriate. Iowa social studies teachers are licensed professionals, licensed by the state of Iowa because they have met the educational requirements established by the state of Iowa. This legislation did not result from a conversation with Iowa social studies teachers but was outsourced from an organization outside of Iowa.”

Therefore, we believe that the Iowa Senate’s consideration of this bill would have a lasting negative impact on Iowa’s education system. As we wrote in 2022, “NCSS has determined that the suggested social studies standards developed by the Civics Alliance do not align with best practices related to the development of social studies standards. If implemented in schools, these suggested standards would have damaging and lasting effects on the civic knowledge of students and their capacity to engage in civic reasoning and deliberation. NCSS does not endorse nor support the use of these standards.” The full response is available at <https://www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/ncss-statement-american-birthright-civics-alliances-model-k-12-social>.

We are concerned that the proposed legislation does not meet these nationally accepted norms related to the development of state standards and curriculum. Our ultimate interest is that any standards used for social studies curriculum and lesson development produce students who have strong content knowledge, strong inquiry and analysis skills, and who are ready to be active participants in civic life. NCSS recently issued a statement on the

development of social studies standards to guide those priorities. This statement is available at <https://www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/ncss-statement-development-social-studies-standards>.

We are happy to further discuss this letter with you and can be reached at whedgepeth@ncss.org and lpaska@ncss.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Wesley Hedgepeth
2023-24 NCSS President



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