

## TESTIMONY

Hello. My name is Sora

I am a member of the Vermont Student Anti-Racism Network. We are a group of students who work to build anti-racist schools. We do many projects including donating anti-racist books to schools, creating curriculum, hosting events, and more. We wrote this testimony together in the hopes that it can help in your work. Here are direct stories from youth in our group.

- I had to take a Black History class outside of school because I wasn't learning enough in school.
  - Similarly, I created my own curriculum of diverse authors because in my three years at a school in Vermont, I had only read one book by an author of color (and they removed that book the next year because people complained about it)
- There were multiple racist incidents at soccer games throughout the state. This wouldn't have been as likely to happen if students were taught about racism and learned about microaggressions.
- I loved when my French class talked about Senegalese culture and I got to learn about the Francophone culture within some of the African countries, not just France. I later attended a camp where I got to speak with people from Senegal, Côte D'Ivoire (ivory coast), Cameroon, and Haiti. Had I not gone to this camp or had that French class, I would not have had exposure to these cultures in a classroom setting. I wish that I could learn more about other cultures in a way that was inclusive, fun, and showcased their beauty and perspective. It makes me sad that classes do not touch on diverse histories and that students are not learning about non-white cultures unless they learn about them outside of school, when it should be a given. Of course classrooms should teach different perspectives, because that is what the world is made up of.
- In my school I have witnessed and experienced instances of people using insensitive language and expressing hostile or misunderstanding attitudes towards students of color. This creates an environment where students of color including myself may feel unwelcome and isolated from their peers. Fortunately this school had recently hired a trained and experienced DEI coordinator who, in addition to organizing and facilitating formal discussions, is always available to speak to when I or others need help. Without their guidance it would have been much more difficult to navigate these challenges. I think that in addition to the basic/normal school counselors and administrators, students should have someone to go to for DEI issues. Sometimes having someone who understands your situation and can help you understand and work through it makes a huge difference. It did/does for me.

We hope you will take our testimony to heart as you vote on the EQS. This is so vital to our educational experience, and it should have been passed yesterday.

We really appreciate all your hard work to make school more equitable for young people!