



November 16, 2022

To: Aimee Guidera, Virginia Secretary of Education
Jillian Balow, Virginia Superintendent of Public Instruction
Daniel A. Gecker, President, Virginia Board of Education

Dear Virginia Education Leaders:

We are writing on behalf of educators and community leaders in Virginia who have alerted the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) that after an intensive process that included Virginia social studies experts and educators, you are now considering an alternative set of History and Social Science curriculum and standards of learning (SOLs) that were externally created and do not align with best practices in the social studies and social sciences. ***We urge the members of the Board of Education to vote and move forward the original version of the Standards for first review.***

The originally proposed History and Social Science curriculum and standards of learning (SOLs) took steps in the right direction to teach about U.S. and Virginia history from diverse perspectives from a wide range of communities. This approach is consistent with NCSS' view that the standards that states develop or adopt should be grounded in content area scholarship, reflect best practices in social studies education, and be inclusive for all student backgrounds and ability levels.

We are concerned that the revised proposed standards of learning do not meet these nationally accepted norms related to the development of state standards. The revised proposed standards use outdated language, have racist undertones, are factually inaccurate, are not age appropriate, appear to promote a clear political agenda, and do not align with recommendations by experts in the social studies content areas.

Our ultimate interest in social studies standards has always been 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. We believe that the original proposed standards of learning support these aims while the revised will not support the development of civic knowledge required for participation in our diverse democratic systems.

NCSS defines social studies as the integrated study of social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. This is no small endeavor. It requires a well-designed, thoughtful K-12 social studies curriculum, instruction, and assessment program for all students. We understand that every state is faced with continuing priorities and challenges to ensure a strong K-12 education system. 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 believe that the original version of the Standards for review were based on a transparent process that included the expertise of Virginia educators, and thus should be moved forward for review, instead.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Shannon M. Pugh in black ink.

Shannon M. Pugh, Ed.D., NBCT
2022-23 President

Handwritten signature of Lawrence M. Paska in black ink.

Lawrence M. Paska, Ph.D., CAE
Executive Director