

## **STUDENT SENATE BILL 2023-1016**

**TITLE: Resolution Advocating for Protections Against the Political Encroachment on the Florida Education System**

**AUTHOR(S): Senator Navya Nair, Deputy Minority Party Leader Gabriela Montes, Senator Nathan McGinnis, Senator Connor Panish, Senator Oscar Santiago Perez, Senator Grace Shoemaker, Senator Jonathan C. Stephens, Senator Anaum Virani**

**SPONSOR(S): Senator Cassie Urbenz, Senator Danny Wolcott, Senator John Rassel, Senator Joaquin Rafaele C. Marcelino, Senator Miranda Holder, Senator Evan E. Rafanan**

**WHEREAS**, on March 10, 2022, the Florida Legislature passed HB 7: Individual Freedom Act, commonly known as the Stop W.O.K.E. Act, aims to prohibit certain educative curriculums that pertain to any of eight specified concepts, mainly regarding people’s “race, color, national origin, or sex...” including but not limited to certain Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity initiatives [1]; and,

**WHEREAS**, HB 7 mainly targets a subset of curriculum called Critical Race Theory (CRT), defined as “an academic and legal framework that denotes that systemic racism is an inherent part of American society,” [1]; and,

**WHEREAS**, CRT is an academic field, encompassing a wide range of research and ideas, that studies the ways in which race and racism intersect with other forms of oppression, including class, gender, and sexuality [2]; and,

**WHEREAS**, CRT provides students with the tools necessary to identify and challenge systems of oppression, and that without it students may be less equipped to navigate the racial dynamics of the world around them and may be more likely to perpetuate racial inequality [2]; and,

**WHEREAS**, on March 28, 2022, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed HB 1557: Florida Parental Rights in Education Act, commonly known as the Don’t Say Gay Bill, which aims to prevent “classroom instruction... on sexual orientation or gender identity... in accordance to state standards,” [3]; and,

**WHEREAS**, due to the effects of HB 7 and HB 1557 Florida now ranks second among states for the most book bans in 2021-2022, the majority of which contain or depict LGBTQ+ and/or people of color, [4]; and,

**WHEREAS**, on March 28, 2022, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis signed HB 1467, which gives school districts the authority to remove certain books or content from classrooms in order to “preserve the rights of parents to make decisions about what materials their children are exposed to in schools.” [5]; and,

**WHEREAS**, under HB 1467, Florida educators are no longer required to “teach reproductive health or any disease, including HIV/AIDS” [5]; and,

**WHEREAS**, the CDC reports that “[q]uality sexual health education provides students with the knowledge and skills to help them be healthy and avoid human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), sexually transmitted diseases (STD), and unintended pregnancy,” [6]; and,

**WHEREAS**, the University of Florida Student Senate has already recognized the importance of supporting sexual and reproductive health through SSB 2022-1023 [7]; and,

**WHEREAS**, on July 1, 2022, HB 7, HB 1557, and HB 1467 officially went into effect [1, 2, 5]; and,

**WHEREAS**, on January 11, 2023, the Florida Department of Education sent a letter to the College Board in Florida stating that the content of AP African American Studies “is inexplicably contrary to Florida law and significantly lacks educational value,” [8]; and,

**WHEREAS**, AP African American Studies aims to “examine the diversity of African American experiences through direct encounters with authentic and varied sources,” [9]; and,

**WHEREAS**, Christopher Tinson, the chair of the African American Studies department at Saint Louis University said, “There’s nothing particularly ideological about [AP African American Studies] except that we value the experiences of African people in the United States,” and denied that Critical Race Theory will be taught in the course [10]; and,

**WHEREAS**, the effects of these House Bills are notable even at the collegiate level, where on January 18, 2023, Florida’s 28 state colleges pledged to “eliminate any requirement or program... that compels belief in critical race theory or related concepts such as intersectionality,” [11]; and,

**WHEREAS**, on January 31, 2023, Desantis announced he will “completely defund diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives at Florida universities,” [12]; and,

**WHEREAS**, the continuing pattern of political encroachment on the right to free expression within classrooms directly opposes the University of Florida’s core value of Inclusion, defined by the goal to “Celebrate differences in identities, thoughts, and abilities..” [13]; and,

**WHEREAS**, the University of Florida prides itself on participating in “Inclusive Excellence” defined as the “active process of including and respecting everyone as we strive for excellence and equitable outcomes in all we do,” [14]; then,

**THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED THAT** the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes the educational value that concepts like Critical Race Theory, sexual and reproductive health, and intersectionality provide to the field of academia; and,

**THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the University of Florida Student Senate is concerned with the increased governmental overreach into the academic freedom of students and faculty; and,

**THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** University of Florida Senate strongly rebukes Governor DeSantis' stance on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives and his actions limiting the education curriculum; and,

**THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the University of Florida Student Senate will continue to support and champion DEI initiatives, while aiming to protect students of all identities in the pursuit of Inclusive Excellence; and,

**THEREFORE, LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** the University of Florida Student Senate calls on the DeSantis administration to refrain from any efforts to suppress intellectual and academic freedom, freedom of expression, viewpoint diversity, and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning

*Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to Governor Ron DeSantis, Florida Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz Jr., incoming University of Florida President Benjamin Eric Sasse, Provost Joseph Glover, Florida Senate President Kathleen Passidomo, Florida House Speaker Paul Renner*

[1] <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/7>

[2] <https://www.naacpldf.org/critical-race-theory-faq/>

[3] <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/1557>

[4] <https://pen.org/report/banned-usa-growing-movement-to-censor-books-in-schools/>

[5] <https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/1467>

[6] [https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/whatworks/what-works-sexual-health-education.htm#:~:text=Quality%20sexual%20health%20education%20\(SHE,STD\)%2C%20and%20unintended%20pregnancy.](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/whatworks/what-works-sexual-health-education.htm#:~:text=Quality%20sexual%20health%20education%20(SHE,STD)%2C%20and%20unintended%20pregnancy.)

[7] [https://sg.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/R2022-1023\\_Resolution\\_Recognizing\\_and\\_Supporting\\_Sexual\\_and\\_Reproductive\\_Health\\_Resources\\_and\\_Opport.pdf](https://sg.ufl.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/R2022-1023_Resolution_Recognizing_and_Supporting_Sexual_and_Reproductive_Health_Resources_and_Opport.pdf)

[8] <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/ron-desantis-ap-african-american-history-florida-press-conference-today-2023-01-23/>

[9] <https://www.the1standard.com/content/files/2023/01/AP-African-American-Studies-Coursework.pdf>

[10] <https://www.npr.org/2023/01/22/1150259944/florida-rejects-ap-class-african-american-studies>

[11] <https://www.fldoe.org/newsroom/latest-news/florida-college-system-presidents-reject-woke-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-dei-critical-race-theory-ideologies-and-embrace-academic-freedom-stml>

[12] <https://www.alligator.org/article/2023/01/ron-desantis-to-defund-university-diversity-equity-inclusion-initatives>

[13] <https://president.ufl.edu/initiatives/uf-core-values/inclusion/>

[14] <https://www.ufl.edu/about/diversity/>