STUDENT SENATE RESOLUTION 2023-1174

TITLE: A Resolution Condemning the Actions and Rhetoric of Florida Governor Ron Desantis

AUTHOR(S): Senator Christian Isaiah Rodriguez, Senator Chalisa Kalyani Budhai SPONSORS: Senate President Oscar Santiago Perez, Senate President Pro Tempore Nathan McGinnis, Judiciary Chairperson Jonathan Chance Stephens, Majority Party Leader Simone Liang, Deputy Majority Party Leader Joaquin R. C. Marcelino, Senator Hunter Monson, Senator Cec Wood-Barron, Senator Asif Islam, Senator Anghelo Gangano, Senator Zoe Richter, Senator Aron Ali-McClory, Senator Bryan Garcia-Ramos, Senator Isabella Scramoncin, Senator Raj Mia, Senator Danielle Haddad, Senator Ryan Athay

WHEREAS, Ron Desantis was elected to be the governor of Florida and represent the needs of all Floridians, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, or political affiliation; and,WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has failed to do so because he has used his position of power to target marginalized communities and forcefully impose his harmful ideology on to Florida citizens; and

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has weaponized education to censor beliefs he disagrees with and force his ideas onto students. Specifically, he has targeted the LGBTQ+ community by erasing any lessons or discussion that acknowledge their existence; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis signed into law The Parental Rights in Education bill, known as the "Don't Say Gay" Bill, which bans classroom instruction regarding gender or sexual orientation that are not "age appropriate or developmentally appropriate" [1]; and,

WHEREAS, under Governor Desantis's discretion, the 'Don't Say Gay' bill was expanded to include all of K-12 in its ban on classroom discussions of sexual orientation and gender, despite there being an estimated 114,000 LGBTQ+ minors that would benefit from learning about concepts that normalize their existence [2]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis signed into law House Bill 1069, which restricts sex education to grades 6-12 and censors what can be taught. The sex education curriculum in Florida can no longer discuss transgender or nonbinary people, will prioritize abstinence-only education, gives no exceptions to teachers for unforeseen situations such as answering a 5th grader's question regarding their period, and emphasizes monogamous heterosexual marriage [3]; and,

Commented [1]: Censoring education of gender and sexuality

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis expresses clear distaste for the LGBTQIA+ community has caused him to remove entire classes from schools, regardless of how much of the curriculum concerns gender or sexuality. For example, he stopped Advanced Placement Psychology from being taught in high schools because it contains content on sexual orientation and gender identity that Desantis considers illegal under state law [4]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis's rewriting of reality through his education policies has extended to the history of racism, as he has made it illegal for public schools to teach the truth about American slavery, segregation, and systematic racism; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has forced public school to teach a new history curriculum that downplays the atrocities of slavery and the impacts it continues to have to this day, going as far as forcing schools to teach students that "slaves developed skills' that could be used for 'personal benefit'" [5]. This historically inaccurate revisionism undermines the horrific genocide, suffering, and oppression that African Americans faced during the plight of slavery; and,
WHEREAS, national curriculums that dare to teach historically accurate lessons have been targeted by Governor Desantis and kept out of Florida schools, such as Advanced Placement African American Studies. Desantis rejected the class because it allegedly taught "critical race theory", one of his political talking points. Creators of the curriculum have denied it is even

included [6]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis signed into law House Bill 7, otherwise known as the Stop WOKE Act, which requires the revision of African American history in Florida public schools and prohibits any education that teaches people can be privileged or unconsciously bigoted because of race or gender [7]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis's censorship of education has gone beyond primary school and extended to public universities. He signed into law Senate Bill 266 which bans general education courses in publicly funded universities from teaching about systematic racism, sexism, or oppression, makes it much easier for faculty to be fired, and bans the funding of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs [8]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has described DEI as "discrimination, exclusion, and indoctrination" against those not afflicted by historical racial oppression [9]. This blatantly ignores the mission of DEI to correct for past racial wrongs and provide opportunities to historically underrepresented groups; and,

Commented [2]: censoring education of race

WHEREAS, these attacks on DEI negatively impact Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Florida like Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) more than predominantly white institutions. FAMU students have filed a class-action lawsuit against the State as the Stop WOKE Act will cause the university to enter a field of financial danger [10]; and,

WHEREAS, the combination of education censorship laws passed by Governor Desantis has created a spike in book banning. From June to December of 2022, Florida had 13 school districts ban books, the most of any state. In total, 357 books were banned in Florida during that span [11]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has claimed that only books teaching woke or sexual ideas to children would be banned, but this is far from the truth. 38% of banned books discuss topics of health and wellbeing, 30% have characters of color and/or themes of race and racism, and 26% have LGBTQIA+ characters and/or themes [11]; and,

WHEREAS, under the Desantis administration, the Florida Department of Education approved supplemental curriculum from right-wing group PragerU that seeks to offer an alternative to "dominant left-wing ideologies." Some of the problematic ideas taught by PragerU include praise for Confederate General Robert E. Lee's crushing of a slave rebellion, fossil fuel is the cleanest energy, and that whiteness and conservatism are under attack [12]; and,

WHEREAS, the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League have described PragerU videos as a "dog whistle to the extreme right" and "filled with anti-immigration and anti-Muslim rhetoric" [12]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis not only mandates, but endorses the use of politicization of education, forcing and indoctrinating all Floridian students to conform to the harmful and discriminatory beliefs he shares with extremists. He has done so by revising history in schools in an attempt to create a generation of students that agree with his political beliefs. As George Orwell put it in *1984*, a commonly cited book by Desantis and his allies: "Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past" [13]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has abused his position of power by vilifying the LGBTQIA+ community and making them the victim of his policies. His policies extend beyond erasing them from education in public schools and attempt to ban them from existing; and,

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Commented [4]: education is being censored and replaced with blatantly conservative curriculums Commented [5]: includes book bans and prageru

Commented [6]: targeting LGBTQ+ outside of education

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis explicitly targeted transgender students by requesting Florida public universities to report how many of their students sought and received gender affirming care. Sixteen attorney generals across the nation condemned the request and declared the request "may be intended to intimidate, and will actually intimidate, university administrators and health care providers and chill vulnerable students ... from accessing necessary medical care" [14]; and, WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has criminalized members from the LGBTQIA+ community expressing themselves and their identity. He signed into law House Bill 1521 which makes it illegal for transgender people to use bathrooms that match their gender identity [15]; and, WHEREAS, Governor Desantis signed into law Senate Bill 1438, which is meant to restrict children from seeing drag performances because, in Governor's Desantis's words, drag shows "sexualize children." However, when he sent in undercover agents to observe a drag show he

criticized, they found no lewd activity [16]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has tried to eliminate transgender people from existing by heavily restricting access to gender-affirming care. He signed into law Senate Bill 254 which bans minors from receiving gender-affirming care and imposes numerous restrictions on gender-affirming care for adults [17]; and,

WHEREAS, SB 254 requires a licensed physician to oversee any healthcare related to transitioning, preventing transgender people from receiving gender-affirming care from nurse practitioners. As many as 80% of transgender adults in Florida were receiving this care from nurse practitioners and lost access [18]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis enacted a rule that excluded gender-affirming services from being covered by Medicaid. The rule effectively stopped financially vulnerable transgender people from receiving gender-affirming care until the Federal District Court of Northern Florida ruled the policy unconstitutional, suggesting the policy was pursued for a political goal rather than a medical one [19]; and,

WHEREAS, the restriction of gender-affirming care directly endangers the lives of transgender people. Research has shown that gender-affirming care is associated with "60% lower odds of moderate or severe depression and 73% lower odds of suicidality" [20]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis's attack on gender-affirming care goes against the consensus among 30 major medical organizations, such as the American Medical Association, American

Psychiatric Association, and American College of Physicians, that gender-affirming care is safe and highly beneficial for transgender people [21]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis's persecution of the LGBTQIA+ community, especially the transgender community, has created fear and led to many fleeing the state and/or turning to crowdfunding to raise enough money to leave [22]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis's policies regarding the LGBTQIA+ community have ignored the consensus of experts in the fields of science, medicine, and law. At best, they have worsened the lives of LGBTQIA+ community members for the sake of political gain. At worst, they have amounted to pure cruelty for the sake of bigotry; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has restricted the bodily autonomy of women and people experiencing menstruation and pregnancy. He continues to enforce tighter regulation imposing on the personal security and free liberty of those who can be pregnant; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has signed into law one of the most restrictive abortion laws into action. The ban prevents four million Florida women of reproductive age from accessing abortion care after six weeks, before many women even know they're pregnant [23]; and,

WHEREAS, This ban would impact people of color disproportionately as it is found by the National Library of Medicine that low-income women and/or women of color have higher rates of abortions than wealthier white women [24]; and,

WHEREAS, regardless of one's political views on abortion, such a strict ban endangers the lives of all women. Restricting women from getting abortions may increase maternal deaths by 29% in Florida, disproportionately impacting women of color [25]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis has continually attacked racial minorities while in office. The endorsements and actions of him and his administration display clear expressions of racist and white supremacist rhetoric; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis championed SB 264 that "limits land purchases by residents of countries of concern" including China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, and Syria. This ensures that "residents and companies of countries of concern will be prohibited from owning agricultural land, and any land within 10 miles of a military base or critical infrastructure facility, such as seaports, airports and wastewater treatment plants" [26]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis under SB 846 prohibits all floridian students from pursuing degrees, dual degrees, or exchange programs with the list of 'countries of concern.' He

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Commented [8]: abortion and bodily autonomy

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reinforced his anti-China policy, equating Chinese-Americans to the national diplomacy issues of the governments of China, further asserting his discriminatory mindset against American people [26]; and,

WHEREAS, Under the Desantis Administration, SB 258 bans the use of apps created in other 'countries of concern' from use on government servers on the grounds of false national security rhetoric. Apps affected by this policy include TikTok, centering claims against 'countries of concern' in equating the founder of TikTok, a Chinese Creator, to the discriminatory anti-China rhetoric that he applies to Chinese-Americans [26]; and,

WHEREAS, When addressing his Democratic opponent for Governor in 2018, Andrew Gillum, an African American man, he told Florida voters that they should not "monkey up" the election [27]. In speaking about an African American man and the potential African American voters he would garner, Governor Desantis used to racist term 'monkey' to describe the African American population, dehumanizing the Black community; and,

WHEREAS, The influence of Governor Desantis incites neo-nazi hate organizations that are centered in a larger network of white supremacist nationalists. The Sunshine State Nationalists (SSN), a neo-nazi organization based in Florida, "refers to itself as 'Ron's Holocaust Task Force,' a reference to Governor DeSantis, engages in activism 'to free the state from Jewish rule from Miami, Dayton, Palm Beach County and Boca Raton'" [28]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Ron Desantis knowingly inspires hate groups to display imagery of antiblack and antisemitic white supremacists imagery. For instance, in July 2022, a group of people associated with SSN and other white supremacist groups protested outside of Turning Point USA waving swastikas and signs reading, "Desantis Country" [28]; and,

WHEREAS, The hateful culture that Governor Desantis complicity incites occurs during the same rise in antisemitic hate crimes in Florida. Hate crimes are ever increasing in Florida. "In Florida, hate crimes against Jews accounted for 80% of the religiously motivated incidents in 2020, and antisemitic hate crimes have risen 300% since 2012 [28]." Antisemitic hate crimes have more exponentially risen during the time that Governor Desantis stands idly by white supremacist groups using his name in their campaign of crusades; and,

WHEREAS, The actions, policies, and incitement of hateful ideology by Governor Desantis have targeted Jewish people, African Americans, and people of color. In response, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People issued a travel advisory, warning people of color to both leave not visit the State of Florida "in direct response to Governor Ron DeSantis' aggressive attempts to erase Black history and to restrict diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in Florida schools [29]."; and,

WHEREAS, Supporting the travel advisory are Equality Florida (LGBT advocacy), Human Rights Campaign, and League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), all organizations that seek to keep their respective minority groups safe. They released a statement saying, "Since the day he took office, Governor DeSantis has weaponized his position to weave bigotry, hate, and discrimination into public law for his own political gain" [30]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis's attack on racial minorities has included the dehumanization of illegal immigrants, who are predominantly Latin American and fled extreme poverty and/or violence. Desantis's policies are completely apathetic to the struggles of these immigrants and instead aim to deport as many illegal immigrants as possible; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis signed Senate Bill 1718, which classifies traveling into Florida with an undocumented immigrant as "human smuggling" and is punishable as a third degree felony, regardless of any familial or spousal relations with that person [31]; and,

WHEREAS, 130,000 undocumented immigrants in Florida are married to U.S. citizens, meaning every one of these spouses could be subject to a third-degree felony under SB 1718 [32]; and,

WHEREAS, SB 1718 also makes it more difficult for undocumented immigrants to gain employment. The law forces employers to verify employee eligibility for all new employees and fines any non-compliant business \$1000 per day, and charges undocumented immigrants using false documentation with a third-degree felony [31]; and,

WHEREAS, undocumented immigrants are vital to Florida's economy, particularly the agricultural sector. SSB 1718 is estimated to cost Florida's economy \$12.6 billion in one year [32]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis's has undermined the humanity of illegal immigrants by ignoring their needs and using their vulnerability as political tools. He created the Unauthorized Alien Transport Program which puts undocumented immigrants in Florida on flights to cities where his political enemies reside. The most famous example is when the program paid for 48 migrants to be flown from Texas to Martha's Vineyard, which is not even in the intended scope of the program [33]; and,

Commented [10]: anti-immigration

WHEREAS, SSB 1718 authorized an additional \$12 million to this program [31], showing that Governor Desantis has prioritized spending millions of dollars on political statements and removing migrants instead of providing resources for undocumented migrants that contribute billions to the Florida economy; and,

WHEREAS, while campaigning for president, Governor Desantis has toughened his antiimmigration rhetoric. He referred to immigrants seeking asylum at the southern border as an "invasion" and has promised to end birthright citizenship, a right guaranteed by the 14th Amendment of the Constitution [34]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Ron Desantis fails to deliver on his campaign front embracing agricultural industry to rebuild our environment, moreso, enacting policy that directly harms the environment. Governor Desantis ran his campaign on a wave of environmentalism and his connection with Florida's sugar agriculture/industry, but made a quick turnaround with environmentalism in his term as Governor [35]; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis routinely denies climate change and bolsters environmental deregulation, a mechanism that worsens pollution [35]. Environmental organizations in Florida have expressed their dissent for Governor Desantis's environmental institute by awarding him a D-minus grade for environmental action; and,

WHEREAS, Though he has had success in vetoing bills that protect the Everglades against deforestation, he continues to denounce climate change and dismiss it as 'left-wing stuff'. Governor Desantis claims, "I can't control the climate..I'm not doing mandates on any of that [35]." There is no action taken that will be preventative of the effects that climate change will have of the state of Florida. Governor Desantis, unfortunately refuses to acknowledge the existence of this scientific phenomenon; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis actively ignores concepts of sustainability as reflected by his policy. He enacted a budget line-item veto preventing the state of Florida from receiving \$346,000,000 to improve energy efficiency. He additionally signed legislation that prevents local government from deciding their futures with clean energy [36]; and,

Commented [11]: environment

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis's policies go beyond political disagreement because they actively endanger lives, limit education crucial for the development of children, and encourage bigotry by targeting marginalized communities. He has consistently used his position of power to sacrifice Floridians at the expense of his own political ambitions; and,

WHEREAS, Governor Desantis is currently boasting of the countless destructive policies mentioned above in his presidential campaign while completely ignoring the negative impacts he has caused [37]; and,

WHEREAS, the University of Florida has been directly harmed by Governor Desantis's policies, particularly his restrictions on higher educations and attacks on marginalized communities that comprise the University of Florida's faculty and student body; and,

WHEREAS, Florida students overwhelmingly disapprove of Desantis's education policies, with a 79% disapproval rate among college students and 1 in 20 planning to transfer because of Desantis's policies [38]; and,

WHEREAS, this Student Senate has previously passed at least 5 resolutions condemning Desantis's actions, including education censorship, social media bans, and union busting [39]; then,

THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED the University of Florida Student Senate strongly denounces and condemns the actions of Ron Desantis that have endangered the lives of all Floridians, including students and faculty at the University of Florida.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes Ron Desantis has censored education that he personally disagrees with and replaced it with inaccurate and false misinformation.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes Ron Desantis has targeted the LGBTQIA+ community by imposing bans on their expression, erasing their existence from public school education, and making it nearly impossible for transgender people to simply exist.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes Ron Desantis has used his power and influence as Governor to dehumanize racial minority groups through the use of hateful, white nationalist rhetoric, policies that only target specific racial groups, and revisionist history in schools that ignores the legacy of racial oppression. **THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED** that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes Ron Desantis has treated undocumented immigrants as less than human by criminalizing their existence and costing the state of Florida billions of dollars to remove them, all for political gain.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes Ron Desantis has infringed on bodily autonomy by imposing one of the harshest abortion bans in the country, endangering the lives and well-being of countless women and people.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate recognizes Ron Desantis has endangered the entire state of Florida by refusing to acknowledge the impending dangers of climate change and actively accelerating its impacts. THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate implores all other branches of Student Government and the University of Florida administration, including President Ben Sasse, to issue a public statement condemning the

actions of Ron Desantis and not comply with his destructive policies.

THEREFORE, LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate urges Ben Sasse, University of Florida administration, and University of Florida Board of Trustees to demand Ron Desantis stop his restrictions on higher education and persecution of marginalized communities that students and faculty belong to, including but not limited to the LGBTQ+ community, African-Americans, Asian-Americans, Latino-Americans, and immigrants.

THEREFORE, LET IT FINALLY BE RESOLVED that the University of Florida Student Senate demands Ron Desantis acknowledge this resolution and the damage he has caused outlined in this resolution, and immediately move to undo the policies he has passed and rhetoric he has used.

Proviso: A copy of this resolution shall be sent to Florida Governor Ron Desantis, Chair of the Florida Board of Governors Brian Lamb, Vice-Chair of the Florida Board of Governors Eric Silagy, Florida Board of Governors Member Timothy M. Cerio, Florida Board of Governors Member and Commissioner of Education Manny Diaz Jr., Florida Board of Governors Member Aubrey Edge, Florida Board of Governors Member Patricia Frost, Florida Board of Governors Member Edward Haddock, Florida Board of Governors Member Ken Jones, Florida Board of Governors Member Darlene Luccio Jordan, Florida Board of Governors Member Alan Levine, Florida Board of Governors Member Charles H. Lydecker, Florida Board of Governors Member Craig Mateer, Florida Board of Governors Member Deanna Michael, Florida Board of Governors Member Jose R. Oliva, Florida Board of Governors Member Steven M. Scott, Florida Board of Governors Member and Florida State University Student Body President Jack Hitchcock, Interim Provost J. Scott Angle, Human Resources Interim Vice President Melissa Curry, Student Life Vice President Heather White, Business Affairs Vice President Curtis Reynolds, and University of Florida Student Body President Olivia Green.

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