



PO BOX 8453, COLUMBIA, SC, 29202, (803) 606-0431, WWW.LWVSC.ORG

TO: K-12 Subcommittee of the House Education and Public Works Committee

FROM: Dr. Janelle Rivers, Education Advocacy Specialist

SUBJECT: H.3264 to establish a pilot program in Media Literacy and Critical Thinking

March 19, 2025

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina urges a favorable report on H.3264, which would establish a pilot program to identify effective instructional practices for developing media literacy and critical thinking. My experience in analyzing student outcome data and in designing and delivering professional development activities for teachers and administrators in South Carolina over a period of more than 20 years has convinced me that there is a great need for high-quality curriculum and skilled instruction in both media literacy and critical thinking.

Our teachers often need help in accessing materials and designing lessons that could teach students how to access, analyze, and evaluate the information they are likely to encounter online and in the public media. Finding appropriate materials and designing activities that will support development of higher order thinking skills requires a significant amount of time and instructional skill. A pilot program that would identify appropriate materials and training would be extremely valuable to teachers, whose initial teacher preparation programs may have emphasized development of lower-level cognitive skills, such as memorization and basic comprehension.

Students need support and practice in verifying information. After years of reviewing item analysis reports from our state tests, I know from experience that distinguishing fact from opinion is a skill that requires supervised practice in learning to analyze claims, determine the veracity of information, and evaluate supporting arguments. This kind of practice is essential for developing critical thinking skills.

In a world where digital technology is a typical pathway for accessing information, South Carolina's teachers and students deserve legislators who will support a quality program in media literacy and critical thinking that helps develop the skills for using digital resources efficiently and effectively.

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Contact: Janelle Rivers, Ph.D., Education Advocacy Specialist, League of Women Voters of South Carolina, rivers12@bellsouth.net, 803-667-6610