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TESTIMONY: H.4375  
BEFORE THE K-12 SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE EDUCATION & PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE

February 13, 2024

I am testifying on behalf of Dr. Janelle Rivers, Education Advocacy Specialist for the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, in opposition to H.4374. Over the years since our state social studies standards were first implemented, results from South Carolina's End-of-Course Examination Program (EOCEP) have demonstrated that South Carolina's standards for U.S. History and the Constitution, the culminating high school course for twelfth-grade students, are extremely rigorous.<sup>1</sup>

State Superintendent Ellen Weaver has recognized that the real problem in social studies is instructional, rather than curricular, by saying, *"I'm particularly concerned that nearly 40 percent of students received a failing score on the U.S. History exam. Our future depends upon citizens with knowledge deeply rooted in our shared story and America's exceptional founding ideals. That's why a strong focus on civics education will be an ongoing priority of my administration."*<sup>2</sup>

South Carolina has a carefully defined development, review, and revision process for creating and updating its social studies curriculum standards. The provisions of this bill reveal a lack of respect for the dedicated educators and community members, enumerated below, who have participated in that process.

"The South Carolina Social Studies College- and Career-Ready Standards were collaboratively written by a team of South Carolina classroom teachers, instructional coaches, district leaders, representatives of professional organizations, community members, parents, higher education faculty, and educators who specialize in English language learners, special education, career

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<sup>1</sup> WPDE News ABC (September 18, 2023). <https://wpde.com/station>. Retrieved February 11, 2024, <https://wpde.com/stationhttps://wpde.com/news/local/sc-students-progress-in-english-struggle-with-math-history-2022-2023-eocep-results-show-south-carolina-department-of-education-end-course-career-readiness-assessments-students-school>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

and technology education, and assessment who were selected through an application and rubric process by the South Carolina Department of Education<sup>3</sup>.”

H.4374 attempts to narrow the discipline of social studies and create an inordinate emphasis on American History. The National Council for the Social Studies has published the following definition to explain that the field of social studies draws on many disciplines. The purpose of social studies extends well beyond memorizing information about significant leaders and events. They define social studies as ...the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provide coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.<sup>4</sup>

South Carolina does not need different social studies standards. The problem we have in this state is that we need better implementation at the classroom level. South Carolina is struggling to attract and retain qualified teachers who can implement the rigorous standards that we already have in place. This bill fails to focus on the real problem; it would misdirect energy and resources away from classrooms.

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina urges you to oppose this bill.

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<sup>3</sup> South Carolina Department of Education (2019). *2020 South Carolina Social Studies College-and-Career-Readiness Standards*. Retrieved February 11, 2024, from South Carolina Department of Education: <https://ed.sc.gov/instruction/standards/social-studies/standards/2019-south-carolina-social-studies-college-and-career-ready-standards/>, page 1.

<sup>4</sup> The definition was officially adopted by National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in 1992. See National Council for the Social Studies, *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (Washington, D.C.: NCSS, 1994): 3