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TESTIMONY BEFORE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

October 8, 2024

I am Dr. Janelle Rivers, representing the League of Women Voters of South Carolina. I am a retired educator and administrator with four grandchildren who attend South Carolina public schools. Although most of my career was spent overseeing assessment programs, accountability reporting, and program evaluation, I also have certification and experience in secondary school guidance and elementary education.

When I worked at the South Carolina Department of Education and as a school district administrator, I learned to appreciate the wisdom of processes that solicit broad participation and allow for public review. In selection of instructional materials, that meant having a panel of subject-area experts to examine and evaluate options and taking time to allow for a public review and comment period. An open process encourages equity by including input from a wide variety of stakeholders and builds credibility for the materials that are eventually chosen.

For all instructional materials that are adopted in South Carolina, State Board of Education Regulation 43-70 requires an evaluation process, which is overseen by an Instructional Materials Review Panel and includes a thirty-day public review period. The Instructional Materials Review Panel submits its recommendations to the State Board of Education through the State Superintendent of Education. The League is concerned that this type of process may have been circumvented when the controversial PragerU materials were made available to South Carolina Public Schools.

It would seem that the State Board of Education, as the body representing the citizens of South Carolina, should have authority to approve or disapprove any materials that are recommended for use in public schools in this state. The League of Women Voters encourages adherence to the inclusive process described in Regulation 43-70, including a thirty-day period for public review and comment, prior to approval of instructional materials from any outside source before they are disseminated for use in the public schools.

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