

Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)
Charles A. Brown-Birmingham, Alabama, Branch
Mobile, Alabama, Branch
Harper Councill Trenholm Sr. Branch

April 1, 2022

Statement of Position on Alabama HB 312 and Similar Bills

We, the undersigned officers of the Charles A. Brown-Birmingham Branch, the Mobile Branch, and the Harper Councill Trenholm Sr. Branch of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), are unified in opposing House Bill 312, titled "Education and Training, Divisive Concepts, Prohibits Teaching of the Concepts Under Certain Circumstances, Allows Teaching of the Concepts in Public Institutions of Higher Education as Long as Assent to the Concept is Not Compelled" (hereinafter HB 312), which the Alabama House of Representatives passed March 17, 2022, by a vote of sixty-five to thirty-two.

If the Alabama Senate and the governor endorse HB 312, the subsequent law will impose significant constraints on the education of students and the training of employees regarding historical facts relating to "race, sex, or religion." We oppose HB 312 and any similarly partisan legislation that politicizes educating or training or that suppresses unencumbered opportunities for students, instructors, or others in academe to think analytically, critically, or objectively and furthermore to speak openly, honestly, or factually about past, present, or future societal matters in Alabama, the South, the United States of America, or elsewhere in the world.

If HB 312 becomes law, it will nullify fundamental rights of citizenship and undermine long respected best practices in education. The First Amendment to the US Constitution and academic freedom are paramount. Moreover, the law will hinder the level of quality in education that helps students become well-informed citizens. Consequently, they will not be as knowledgeable about history, as aware about issues of diversity, or as engaged with the general progress of local, state, regional, national, or international society as the students could be with proper academic exposure to groundbreaking as well as traditional disciplinary and interdisciplinary concepts, hypotheses, and theories. Cancelling the academic investigating of human culture is antithetical to earnest scholarly pursuit and hence the developing of learned, humanitarian, and patriotic citizens.

The unethical suppression of intellectual dialogue in classrooms and in other public spaces that endorsement of HB 312 by the Alabama House, the Alabama Senate, and the governor will legalize will break decades of societal progress that Alabamians have made regarding ethnic injustice, gender and sex discrimination, health disparity, economic inequality, academic advancement, and religious freedom. We therefore oppose any legislation that undermines educational freedom, threatens legitimate expression, or constrains discussion of "race, sex, or religion," as identified by HB 312. Such acts have adverse impacts on the intellectual, cultural, and economic prosperity of

the state and harken back to periods when countless lawmakers were solidly opposed to universal equality.

For the above mentioned reasons and myriad others, we tender this statement as a formal position opposing HB 312.

Signed,

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