

February 21, 2023

Honorable Westly W.O. Moore
Maryland Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1924

Honorable Brooke E. Lierman
Comptroller
80 Calvert Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21404-0466

Honorable William C. Ferguson, IV
Senate President
State House – H-107
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1924

Honorable Dereck E. Davis
State Treasurer
80 Calvert Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21404-0466

Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker of the House
State House – H-101
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1924

Honorable Jheanelle K. Wilkins
Chair, Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland
131 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21404-1912

Re: Prince George’s County Council Denounces the Actions of Florida Governor

Dear Governor Moore, President Ferguson, Speaker Jones, Comptroller Lierman, and Treasurer Davis:

The Prince George’s County Council strongly supports the College Board’s offering of an African American Studies course for the country’s public high school students, and unequivocally denounces the actions of Governor Ron DeSantis to block this course from being taught to young people in Florida.

Public school education holds a unique place in our society and is fundamental to our democracy. Our children offer us hope and a future, and they deserve to receive accurate historical knowledge about the African American experience.

In the 2023 school year, there are 198 public schools serving 131,146 students, most of them black and brown children, in Prince George’s County Public Schools. We strongly believe that all students have the right to a diverse, and comprehensive education, and we object to Governor DeSantis’ decision to omit the AP African American Studies course from the academic experience of Florida students.

Sadly, we live in challenging times in our nation, marked by acts of deep division, violence, and intolerance. Governor DeSantis’ false assertion that the African American studies course “lacks educational value,” is a stark reminder of an ideology which seeks to erase the African American experience from our nation’s history.

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The Florida Governor's actions are deplorable and equate to a modern-day form of education oppression which must be denounced loudly and clearly. If the message from the elected leaders in Florida is that Black Americans' history does not count, perhaps the response from the elected leaders in Maryland should be a thorough review of our relationships with businesses in Florida, as well as a plan to discourage travel by Marylanders to Florida until a commitment is made to truly value the history and experiences of black Americans.

Black history is American history. In Prince George's County, we celebrate our diversity and unity every day, and Black History Month is an opportunity to acknowledge our progress and where we can still improve. We encourage every lawmaker, parent, educator, and concerned citizen to join us in speaking out against Governor DeSantis' divisive, abhorrent actions. We thank the people of Prince George's County for supporting what is right for our residents and communities.

Sincerely,

Thomas E. Dernoga, Chair
Prince George's County Council

cc: Honorable Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Honorable Angela D. Alsobrooks, Prince George's County Executive
Maryland Federal Delegation Members
Prince George's Senate Delegation Members
Prince George's House Delegation Members
Prince George's County Council Members
Jennifer A. Jenkins, Council Administrator
William Hunt, Deputy Council Administrator
Colette Gresham, Associate Council Administrator
Tara Jackson, Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive
Joy Russell, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive