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WA SCHOOL'S CHIEF COULD DEFUND LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS BASED ON CURRICULUM CHOICES

Dave Bernstein | Published: February 12, 2024

The Washington Legislature is considering a bill that would allow the defunding of local school districts based on whether they adopt curriculum materials mandated by the state.

HB 2331 passed out the House Education Committee in late January and was referred to the Rules Committee.

Center Square said a report on the bill passed out of the committee on Jan. 29th stated school boards would be prevented "from refusing to approve or prohibiting the use of an educational material on the basis that it relates to or includes the study of the role and contributions of individuals or groups that are part of a protected class as established in public school nondiscrimination provisions."

Yet many parents are so concerned about local control and curriculum, that **Washington Policy Center** (WPC) claims 46,000 students have already left public education and "The bill would tell families that their local school is not responsive to the community, adding to the trend of families leaving the public system."

WPC's Liv Finne writes "Since 2019 the state legislature has passed laws encouraging school districts to teach the false and divisive Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in public schools. Many local schools object to adopting textbooks and materials that promote harmful ideas to children."

Finne argues the bill runs against state law that says decisions on textbooks and materials should be made at the local level. However the legislation's primary sponsor, Rep. Monica Stonier, D-Vancouver, says HB 2331 would serve as an important anti-discriminatory compliance practice.

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction responded to Center Square with a written response;

"The bill aims to make clear that banning books and instructional materials based on the inclusion of the role and contributions of individuals or groups that are part of a protected class could be discrimination and could be in violation of state and federal nondiscrimination laws," an OSPI spokesperson emailed. "It requires local school

boards to adopt or revise policies and procedures for responding to complaints/concerns about materials, which will create a more transparent process for families or community members who express concerns. Much of what is presented in the blog article by the Washington Policy Center, a political advocacy organization, is not rooted in fact."