

AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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The Teaching Division of the American Historical Association Supports the FAIR Act to Provide Multi-Vocal, Inquiry-Based Instruction for California K-12 History Education

The American Historical Association (AHA) supports the California FAIR Act and its attempts to provide an inquiry-based instructional model to elementary students that gives them access to a broad range of viewpoints in primary sources and encourages them to develop their own evidence-based arguments. The AHA urges those engaged in revising the curriculum to adhere to the letter and the spirit of the FAIR Act.

The FAIR Act broadens the categories of history included in social science education and strengthens anti-discrimination policies governing textbook and instructional material selection by the state of California. As enacted, the bill would require instruction in social sciences to include a study of the role and contributions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Americans, persons with disabilities, and members of other cultural groups, to the development of California and the United States. In addition, the bill as enacted expands the categories prohibit[ed by] a governing board of a school district from adopting instructional materials that contain any matter reflecting adversely upon persons to include ethnicity, gender, religion, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, and occupation.

The teaching and learning of history at the K-12 level is important for training students in the skills and habits of mind that lead to active and engaged citizenry. Giving students access to primary sources that reflect the range of human experience within an inquiry-based instructional model encourages students to engage fully with the world they live in. The document-based evidence that studying history requires promotes literacy as well as critical thinking. In learning to craft their own evidence-based arguments, students learn the skills and habits of mind that will be useful to them beyond the classroom.

In enacting the FAIR Act, the state of California showed an understanding that the future relies on an educated citizenry with an understanding of the diversity of human experience. This multi-vocal, inquiry-based instructional model is a step in the right direction for history education.