

AHA Statement Opposing Exclusion of LGBTQ+ History in Florida

Approved by AHA Council, May 2023

The American Historical Association condemns the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE)'s recent ruling banning educators from "provid[ing] classroom instruction to students in grades 4 through 12 on sexual orientation or gender identity unless such instruction is . . . expressly required by state academic standards." No such mandates appear in current American or world history standards. To comply with this clause, teachers would have to exclude from their curriculum significant aspects of the nation's history.

Consider the implications of this radical legislation—radical in the sense of the reach of state government into local classrooms. Extending Florida's so-called "Don't Say Gay" law, the FLDOE would eliminate almost entirely the history of LGBTQ+ people from the Florida social studies curriculum. And to eliminate that history is to compel a distorted and incomplete teaching of the past. Neither law nor policy will change the fact that LGBTQ+ people have always existed. This erasure flattens the story of America's long Civil Rights Movement by ignoring the 1969 Stonewall Riots and the pathbreaking 2015 Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges*. It bars students from examining cultures, religions, and societies—including Indigenous nations within Florida—that have embraced traditions of gender fluidity and homosexuality as meaningful categories of social identity and organization. Its effort to silence and segregate LGBTQ+ voices cannot but cripple our understanding of the richness and diversity of the human experience.

Historical aspects of "sexual orientation or gender identity" include heterosexual and cisgender peoples, too, and we wonder how the state might regard historical explorations of womanhood, masculinity, family relations, gender roles, even the marriages of John and Abigail Adams or Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. As the AHA explained in its 2021 [Statement on LGBTQ+ History Curriculum](#), "Students who attend schools that include LGBTQ+ history will therefore not only be better informed citizens but will also be better prepared to engage with the complexities of everyday life." The new policy's distressing imprecision combined with threats of license revocation and termination for those who violate it will chill good history teaching in the state.

We ask that the FLDOE reconsider its vague and destructive policy of censorship, and instead encourage the teaching of accurate and inclusive histories of the United States and the world. These histories necessarily include LGBTQ+ people. Simple respect for the past in all its complex humanity demands that we give attention to these experiences.