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Good evening. Thank you for allowing me to speak about the importance of a **Culturally Responsive Education and/or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**. There are a few points I want to make:

Culturally Responsive Education is worth fighting for.

- Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) is a method of rigorous, student-centered learning that connects curriculum and teaching to students' experiences, perspectives, histories & cultures. CRE cultivates critical thinking instead of just test-taking skills; relates academic study to contemporary issues and students' experiences; fosters positive academic, racial, and cultural identities; develops students' ability to connect across cultures; empowers students and inspires them to fall in love with learning.
- The New York State Education Department has prioritized a curriculum focused on promoting DEI. This will help achieve educational equity – eliminating barriers, biases, and disparities. It will also increase all students' chances to graduate high school prepared for college, for a career, and for life. There is nothing more patriotic than to create a better country by treating all citizens with dignity and respect – and building our capacity as Americans to work together.

We are obligated and responsible to educate our children for the future.

- When we teach half-truths and propaganda, we are in fact teaching some of our children to feel superior and others to feel inferior. I want my children to learn the truth, to see themselves represented in the curriculum, to see teachers who look like them, to have a sense of belonging. It is unpatriotic to think that as a people, society, and nation what we have always done is the best that we can do, that change is unnecessary, that striving to do better and be better will somehow destroy us. Patriotism is not achieved by teaching lies, patriotism is achieved by students understanding that they can make a difference, that America, was not, and is not, perfect, but as citizens we have always united in a desire for a better future together.
- Culturally responsive curriculum teaches our students how to think critically and make connections with all sources of information. This is critically important in today's world that is full of false information. As teachers and parents, we have a responsibility to teach our children to use truth to help navigate the world. This builds student self-confidence and a healthier student body -- where the entire community has a strong sense of belonging. This makes everyone feel safer in all environments.

- We cannot pretend to be race-neutral or “colorblind” and we cannot teach this lie in schools. Creating a just and equitable learning environment that embraces the history and experiences of its learners is not only good for students, but also for our communities and our shared future. In the US, Gen Z constitutes more than a quarter of the population and is the most diverse generation in the nation’s history. Trust students to talk about what’s happening in the world around them. When educators teach the truth, students start to see themselves as part of a bigger story.
- If we ignore the world around us and bury our heads in the sand, we are setting our children up for failure. We live in a complex, interconnected world where diversity, shaped by globalization and technological advance, forms the fabric of modern society. If we continue to teach a homogenous curriculum that doesn’t include different life experiences, cultures, and ethnicities, we will send our children out, ill equipped and unprepared to live in a world outside this 8–10-mile radius. I beg you, think of our children’s future, not this moment of anger based on political divisiveness.
- Research shows that students who see positive representations of themselves in their curriculum have improved educational outcomes. For students of color as well as white students, CRE decreases dropout rates and suspensions, increases student participation, confidence, academic achievement, and graduation rates. This is also pertinent to their future. A Boston Consulting Group study found that companies with more diverse management teams have 19% higher revenues due to innovation. Regardless of the type of industry or career our children choose for their future, diversity is an integral part of a successful revenue-generating business and will only continue to become more important.

Teaching the truth is the core of a good education.

- Teaching about the cultures of a wide range of students isn’t something to fear. A shared, honest understanding of the past bridge’s divides. This new level of aggression against teaching diversity is part of a culture war that is playing out at a national and global scale. District leaders and legislators can change the narrative with attention to racial equity, culturally responsive curriculum, and meaningful learning. This is directly connected to the past, the issue, however coded, is the same; the rhetoric, anger, tactics, and strategies are not new. Whether many realize it or not, people are stoking fear and outrage for their own political agenda, and I refuse to have my child’s education be held hostage and sacrificed for any political party, ideology, or agenda. Our children deserve better!
- Truth in our classrooms propels young people towards a more united, inclusive, and just future. Students need to learn the full and diverse range of U.S. history and current events, even when it doesn’t live up to the values we believe in. If we want our future to

be different, we must deal with the past openly and honestly. Facing divisive topics head on is a long tradition in this country. The Declaration of Independence was divisive. The abolition of slavery was so divisive that there was a Civil War. Let teachers teach and keep politicians from legislating away our right to the truth. Just as principals, superintendents, and educators had to make a choice after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and the book burning of 1975, school leaders today have a choice to make, what side of history do you want to be on, what will textbooks say about _____ district in 20 years?

- If teachers are only allowed to talk about why the U.S. is “great” without talking about its flaws, then we are asking them to teach propaganda, not history. These efforts are attempting to prohibit the teaching of ideas they don’t like – that’s censorship. We need racial equity to be an important and central part of our curriculum, at all grade levels and not just in history classes. Young people need skills and knowledge to navigate the world in which they live. We live in a world where racial injustice isn’t just historic – it’s ongoing. If someone has a question about how a class is being taught or how curriculum is being used in schools, it works best to have an honest conversation with the educator, principal, superintendent, school board, and/or school community. A direct approach strengthens relationships, whereas reporting teachers on questionable websites that are trying to map what they deem as “bad behavior” is harmful to educators and our school communities.

Some of these talking points were adapted from the following site, they also have other great messaging ideas.

https://futureforlearning.org/2021/06/03/truth-bridges-divides/?fbclid=IwAR229yenozzqZAS-A_3kbU7RDs6QqOaHMOLNzOXAPm9PqyN2cc_FrnZb5CU