

Item: _____

Moved by: _____

Prepared by: Ashley Mayfield

Seconded by: _____

Reviewed by: Marcy Ingram

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE STRONGLY URGING GOVERNOR BILL LEE TO VETO HOUSE BILL 580/SENATE BILL 623. SPONSORED BY COMMISSIONER TAMI SAWYER AND COMMISSIONER VAN D. TURNER, JR.

WHEREAS, the Shelby County Board of Commissioners is strongly urging Governor Bill Lee to oppose House Bill 580/Senate Bill 623 that was recently amended and passed in the General Assembly on Wednesday, May 5, 2021 as this bill attempts to punish public schools that teach about the struggles and impact of systemic racism in America; and

WHEREAS, Shelby County Schools, Tennessee's largest school district with over 110,000 students, overwhelmingly serves students of color and those from low-income families. According to the most recent Tennessee Department of Education data, Shelby County's student population is 76.1% African-American and 15.5% Hispanic, with 56% of the students we serve designated as economically disadvantaged. As of the 2019-2020 school year, 57.3% of SCS teachers identify as African-American. It is vital that we do not take away the efforts of an historic county by attempting to mute the voices, perspectives, and lived experiences of the same students, teachers, and families our school district serves; and

WHEREAS, the Shelby County Board of Commissioners opposes this broad, unclear, and irrational legislation, which is another way to deviate from providing our students with facts of history that continue to play significant roles in the lives of many of our teachers and students. There are substantial concerns regarding the extensive impact that this bill will have on the schools, teachers, and students of our state; and

WHEREAS, vetoing the House Bill 580/Senate Bill 623 will allow teachers and students the freedom to build a more inclusive, honest, and transparent dialogue. This bill prevents our students from having necessary scholarly discussions that could be the key driver for growth, unity, and understanding. It is through our history that we unfold the facts about our world, national, and state history; and

WHEREAS, Shelby County, Tennessee is home to several historic moments and it is only rational that teachers are permitted to teach about the various Civil Rights Movement that has taken place in our city and county. It is only rational that our teachers are allowed to teach students about the powerful lessons of our history; and

WHEREAS, the Shelby County Board of Commissioners urges Governor Bill Lee to veto this bill because it is the fair and honest thing to do. Our students should be exposed to factual information from multiple perspectives. The constituents of Shelby County, Tennessee seek for you to advocate and allow teachers to be able to teach and relate to all students so that they can continue to learn and explore the meaningful events of history that has taken place; and

WHEREAS, the Shelby County Board of Commissioners feels that threatening the funding of state education is excessive and will further create institutionalized divisions in education. It is an unfair and unjust bill that will prohibit teachers and students from speaking their truths. Choosing to discipline teachers and school districts that dare to discuss the fundamental problem with America dating back to its founding: the concept of slavery in a nation built on the idea of equality, will only further create more of an inequality.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF SHELBY COUNTY, TENNESSEE, that the Shelby County Board of Commissioners strongly urges Governor Bill Lee to veto House Bill 580/Senate Bill 623 for the reasons articulated above.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall take effect in accordance with the Shelby County Charter, Article II, § 2.06(B).

Lee Harris, County Mayor

Date: _____

ATTEST:

Clerk of County Commission

ADOPTED: _____