



Assembly Bill 414

Written Testimony of Rep. David Bowen

August 11, 2021

Chairman Knodl and members of the Assembly Committees on Government Accountability and Oversight,

I offer my testimony today on Assembly Bill 414 under the weight of profound disappointment. Quite simply put, this bill is unnecessary, and it is born out of the drive to divide, rather than unite. The debate surrounding “critical race theory” and whether or not it should be taught to employees of state and local government is clearly a baseless attempt to feed the flames of our hyper-partisan culture wars, but it is more than that. Most importantly, it represents a failure by fellow brothers and sisters of our great State to actively listen, and a stubborn unwillingness to truly contend with our past.

America is a great nation, but it is not a nation without blemishes. Ask any person of color in this room or elsewhere, and they will be able to tell you about the discrimination, the hurdles, and the outright racism they or their family members & friends have experienced. Let us not forget that there are individuals alive today who participated in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. There are individuals alive today who grew up under the shadow of Jim Crow. There are individuals alive today who survived internment, forced assimilation, and genocide both here and abroad. And there are individuals alive today whose grandparents were born into slavery in this very country. If anyone tries to tell you that discussions about these issues, these experiences, do not belong in the workplace, they are wrong.

And members of the Committee, let me tell you today that these experiences and these issues *matter*. Learning about them *matters*. Earlier this year, we voted unanimously (and correctly) in both chambers of the Legislature to incorporate lessons on the Holocaust and other genocides into our state curriculum; have we already forgotten that those atrocities were fueled by the very types of both casual and systemic racism we’re discussing today?

Today, I ask you to truly listen to the testimonies before you, and to empathize with the speakers. Emphasize with their lived experiences but recognize what systemic effects have force us all to deal with. I ask you to grapple with the fact that the mistakes of the past, even when we recognize them as mistakes, still rear their heads in the present. I ask you to remember that those who deny their past, who refuse to learn from it, are doomed to repeat it.

Thank you for your time.



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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF ASSEMBLY BILL 414
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY & OVERSIGHT
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11, 2021
JULAIN K. APPLING, PRESIDENT

Thank you, Chairman Knodl and committee members, for the opportunity to speak in support of AB 414, which prohibits training of Wisconsin's state and local government employees in sex and race stereo-typing, which is found in popular Critical Race Theory-based training across America.

While this bill does not use the term "Critical Race Theory," the components the bill addresses are part of what is commonly and popularly referred to as "Critical Race Theory" or CRT. Thus, we believe it is appropriate to address this topic and use this term as we discuss this bill.

Critical Race Theory is deeply rooted in Marxism and is one of the biggest threats to fundamentally changing our Republic. Proponents of CRT make race the lens through which we are to view all aspects of American life. CRT views our government and our laws as systemically racist, uses identity politics, which weakens the public and private bonds that serve as a foundation of trust and allow for civic engagement, and seeks to destroy the people's sovereignty by allowing government to become a dictatorship.

Critical Race Theory, like many movements that are designed to destroy our Republic, evolved from ivory tower philosopher-academics and has permeated Main Street America, shaping the way we ordinary people think. We are bombarded with dialogue about CRT in social media, in corporate boardrooms, K-12 classrooms, in both public entities and private business diversity training and even in church. Not only has the CRT journey made record time from think tanks to dinner tables, it is gas lighting racial tensions and deepening our divide.

It is important to recognize that CRT holds to the idea that:

1. **There is no absolute truth**—only competing narratives. It sees "lived experiences" as mattering more than facts.
2. **Individuals are either an oppressor or victim.** You are predetermined by immutable characteristics such as race to fall into either category. Culture is defined by groups exercising power over each other.
3. **America is systemically racist and must be dismantled.** It sees America as having been founded on the system of capitalism, which it asserts is racist, and therefore must be disrupted.

True equality will be achieved by maximizing the opportunities for Americans to become self-sufficient, not by dividing Americans on the basis of race and doling out resources based on skin color.

If CRT is implemented in our key institutions, its social policies will continue to erode the key preconditions for advancement—family, education, and work.

Training content for all state and local government must not use the goal of promoting diversity of thought as a reason to indoctrinate employees to see the world, and America in particular, through a racial lens.

Training content should use instructional content that creates a shared sense of national identity – America belongs to *all* Americans and that our nation's progress is worth celebrating.

Training content should highlight the foundational principles of our constitution: equality of all humans with equal protection under the law.

Policy makers at the local and state levels, in addition to business leaders, and community leaders, should be champions of rebuilding the institutions of family, education and the workplace so that all citizens can overcome the barriers to self-sufficiency regardless of skin color.

We live in the greatest country in the world; one that has spent its existence to better itself for the sake of its citizens and with an overabundance of generosity to fellow humans around the globe. But it is becoming increasingly more difficult to recognize the land of the free that our many of our brave have made the ultimate sacrifice to defend and protect.

Our nation's constitution is predicated on the assumption that all men and women are created equal. Period. While we have not been a perfect nation and we have long acknowledged many of our saddest wrongdoings, we have made and continue to make great progress in our short life as a country, which deserves both celebration and commitment to continued improvement of the best example of government. The best example of government is that which is committed to making sure state and local government employees are not subjected to training that undermines America, discriminates against people based on race, demands people of certain races apologize for the race they were created as a part of, and subjects certain people to imposed guilt for wrongdoings in which they have had absolutely no part. That's about as un-American as we can imagine.

Opponents will say CRT is a figment of fertile conservative imaginations, but their reaction to our concerns remind me of the famous line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*: "The lady doth protest too much, me thinks." CRT is real and dangerous. Training local and state government officials in this insidious ideology, using taxpayer funds no less, cannot be allowed.

Assembly Bill 414 will help ensure that such training sessions do not happen. We urge support in the committee and that the bill be sent to the full Assembly in a timely way for a vote.

Thank you for your thoughtful and careful attention to our position on this bill. I am available for questions, should you have any.



GAE MAGNAFICI

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 28th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

TO: Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight
FROM: Representative Gae Magnafici
DATE: August 11th, 2021
SUBJECT: Testimony in support of Assembly Bill 414

Thank you, Chairman Knodl and members of the Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight for holding a hearing on Assembly Bill 414.

AB 414 prevents politicization and discrimination in the training of state and local government employees. It does this by prohibiting sex and race stereotyping in mandatory training. AB 414 pinpoints specific concepts that are not to be taught, such as "An individual's moral character is necessarily determined by the individual's race or sex."

One typical example of racial stereotyping in training and education is known as "Critical Race Theory."

Critical Race Theory is an ideology that claims everything about a person is based on the color of their skin. Not their behavior, not their values, not their environment, but their skin color. This runs antithesis to Martin Luther King Junior's dream of a nation where children aren't judged by the color of their skin, but the content of their character.

Furthermore, Critical Race Theory claims beloved institutions are simply rigged against minorities, with very little chance to succeed if you're not the chosen race. I believe in America everyone has the opportunity to get ahead, no matter your race.

None of this is to mention what Critical Race Theory claims regarding racial majorities. It hypothesizes white and other privileged folks are inherently racist and perpetuate "racist" institutions that serve to keep minorities down. It creates categories of oppressed and oppressors, pinning them against each other, and claims no one individual can be free to chase the American dream.

Critical Race Theory is rapidly progressing into our beloved institutions, and is being pushed by political operatives across the country. The people of Wisconsin deserve to know their state and local governments are not pushing political and racist training such as Critical Race Theory.

Slavery and other injustices happened. We need to learn from history, not redefine it. The United States has made leaps and bounds of progress tearing down the backward thoughts of those who judge based on skin color. Theories like Critical Race Theory undo that progress.

To claim that America was founded on racism and that our constitution and way of life should be overthrown is just wrong. Our country was founded on the idea that all people are created equal and all Americans are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Thank you. I hope you will support this important bill. I am happy to take any questions.



NASW WI TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO ASSEMBLY BILL 414

Chairperson Knodl and members of the Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight:

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Wisconsin Chapter, I am asking that you oppose Assembly Bill 414.

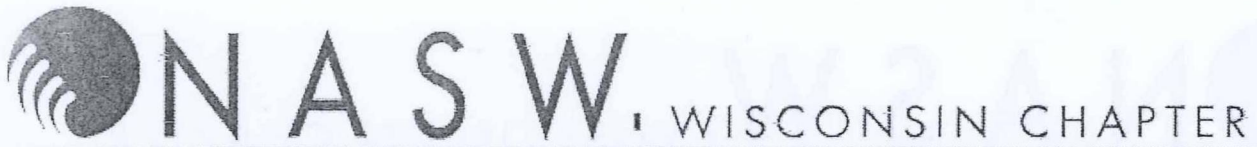
As social workers we believe in promoting conditions, policies and practices that encourage respect for cultural and social diversity within the United States. We also believe in the importance of facilitating informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions. Beyond these values, as our state become more diverse, it becomes critical that our state and local employees learn how to understand and respect differences of their fellow workers, customers and clients. Being able to understand and respect differences means understanding the history of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds and understanding how policies based upon race throughout our history have impacted African Americans, other ethnic and racial communities and caused the tremendous disparities of wealth in our country. This bill does nothing to advance understanding of people coming from different racial and ethnic groups and as I will mention later could have the impact of intimidating any discussion or training on these topics for state and local employees in a comprehensive manner.

Senate Bill 410 proposes to address a problem that does not exist. There is no evidence that state or local government has ever promoted sex stereotyping or teaching their employees that one race or sex is better than another race or sex or that one individual is responsible for the acts of other individuals of the same race or sex in the past. There is absolutely no evidence that state or local government employers are teaching their employee to hate each other or to hate white people.

The biggest danger from this bill is the unintended consequences of intimidating state and local government employers who are simply trying to help their employees understand and respect the different racial and ethnic backgrounds and experiences of their fellow employees and the Wisconsin residents who they help every day. We don't need and should never have speech codes in our state and local governments. We also don't need to encourage, sanction and support law suits or civil actions against our local

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National Association of Social Workers

and state government because an employee is uncomfortable with a training.

This bill seems designed to prevent any teaching of American history or discussion of race or sex that could lead state or local government employees to feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress. By logical extension Germany's teaching of the holocaust would be illegal as it almost certainly has made German students feel discomfort, guilt and anguish about Germany's responsibility for the holocaust.

In order to best serve our diverse state we need knowledgeable and well-trained state and local employees who can sensitively provide outstanding service to all our residents.

Please vote down Assembly Bill 414.

Marc Herstand, MSW CISW,
Executive Director

National Association of Social Workers, Wisconsin Chapter

 **MARCELIA NICHOLSON**
MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD CHAIRWOMAN • 5TH DISTRICT SUPERVISOR

Committee members,

I was disappointed to learn that Assembly Bill 414 would be before the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee at today's hearing. This bill violates the principles of local control and seeks to block local governments from offering useful trainings that advance racial and gender equity in our state.

Racial equity trainings are an integral part of Milwaukee County's work to realize our vision of becoming the healthiest county in Wisconsin by achieving racial equity. This legislation would place a roadblock in our path to advancing this vision.

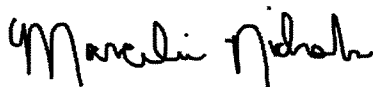
Milwaukee County's racial equity trainings have been well received by employees and are putting us in a position to make tremendous strides in serving our residents. Training government employees to confront inequities when they see them in the workplace is essential for ensuring that every resident feels welcome in our communities.

Milwaukee County declared racism a public health crisis in 2019. Since making that declaration, more than 170 communities across the country have followed our lead because they understand the harm that systemic racism has done to communities of color.

As a matter of local control, counties and municipalities must be free to use the training options they deem useful in advancing their goals. Milwaukee County has been described as one of the most challenging places for Black people to live, based on factors such as health disparities, educational outcomes, and the income gap. The people who grew up in this community and represent the people of this community must be empowered to determine the best solutions to take on these problems.

I would encourage the members of this committee to join Milwaukee County and the many other local governments across Wisconsin that have actively taken on the task of advancing racial equity. When people of all races and genders feel that they have equitable opportunities to live prosperous lives in Wisconsin, our state can live up to its full potential.

Sincerely,



Chairwoman Marcelia Nicholson
Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

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*Testimony before the Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight
State Senator André Jacque
August 11, 2021*

Chairman Knodl and Committee Members,

Thank you very much for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 414.

Rep. Magnafici and I introduced this legislation to prevent politicization and discrimination in the training of state and local government employees and prohibit sex and race stereotyping in training provided to employees of local and state government, many of whom have contacted me with concerns about the promotion of racism and gender stereotyping foisted upon them in the workplace and utilization in state and local agency employment decisions. Government at all levels has spent millions of dollars ‘training’ government workers to assert divisive, anti-American propaganda, including events where public employees have been required to attend trainings where they are told that “virtually all white people contribute to racism” or where they are required to say that they “benefit from racism” or that there is racism embedded in the belief that America is the land of opportunity or the belief that the most qualified person should receive a job.

These types of ‘trainings’ not only run counter to the fundamental beliefs for which our nation has stood since its inception, but they also engender division and resentment within the workforce.

Under AB 414, a political subdivision or state agency is prohibited from requiring an employee to attend a training that teaches, advocates, acts upon, or promotes race or sex stereotyping. Among the concepts that are prohibited from being taught under the bill are that one race or sex is inherently superior to another race or sex and that an individual, by virtue of the individual’s race or sex, bears responsibility for acts committed in the past by other individuals of the same race or sex. Political subdivisions and state agencies are required to post on the Internet site of the subdivision or agency all training materials that are not required to be kept confidential.

Thank you for your consideration of Assembly Bill 414.



DATE: August 11, 2021

FROM: State Representative Supreme Moore Omokunde

TO: Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight

RE: Opposing AB414 - relating to: anti-racism and anti-sexism training for employees of state government and local government.

Thank you Chairman Knodl and Members of the Assembly Committee on Government Accountability and Oversight for the opportunity to testify in opposition to AB414. I have seen bills similar to this introduced across the United States this year by Republican-majority legislatures and I am severely disappointed with the discourse surrounding this issue.

History, exactly as it happened, is complicated and often uncomfortable, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't collectively address it as one nation. Ignoring truths simply because they make people uncomfortable is not the answer – in fact, it is a recipe for further grandiose myths and conspiracies.

Why is AB414 a problem? This bill is both racist and extremist. It seeks to erase the history of Black and Brown folks in America, our struggle and lived experience. Rather than seeking to sideline true history and lived experience, we need to come to terms with it in order to form a more perfect union. Teaching the truth about America's past is not "sexual stereotyping" as my Republican colleagues argue...it is American history and American truth. Our past informs our present!

I know from experience that Milwaukee County is one of the most difficult places in the country for a Black person to grow up and live. Racism has been declared a public health crisis in our city and county because of the severe disparity in health outcomes for Black folks. In order to even begin to address this issue, we must inform our state and local employees of how this disparity came about. Every community in Wisconsin is different and each community deserves the option to train their employees in the ways that best suit their past and present. These vital employees are the face of our state and local agencies. It is imperative that we create an environment in which all of our residents have opportunities to thrive.

AB414 attempts to erase the stains of our nation's past – stains that cannot be ignored and must be addressed. This legislation seeks to divide our country even more than the right's "Critical Race Theory" strawman does. I strongly urge the committee to reject AB414.

Sincerely,

Representative Supreme Moore Omokunde
17th Assembly District

17TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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