

NASW WI TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO ASSEMBLY BILL 413 PRESENTED ON
OCTOBER 7, 2021 BEFORE THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON COLLEGES AND
UNIVERSITIES

Chairperson Murphy and members of the Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities
Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Assembly Bill 413. On behalf of the National Association
of Social Workers, Wisconsin Chapter, I am testifying in opposition to this legislation.

As our state and nation becomes more and more diverse it is critical that our college students learn to
understand and appreciate Wisconsin residents from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Part of
this understanding comes from receiving a comprehensive and accurate education on the history of
racial and ethnic groups in the United States, including the impact of racism on the African-American,
Native American and Latino communities, among others.

As stated so articulately by Madison Urban League CEO Dr. Ruben Anthony at the August 11th
hearing before the Senate and Assembly Committees on Education, there is a huge amount of under
education on the issue of race that has taken place in the United States. Most high school and college
students never learn that African Americans were denied federal home loans and entry into trade
professions after World War II and could never accumulate equity that they could pass on to their
children and grandchildren. Most high school and college students also have never learned that there
were restrictive covenants all over the United States that restricted where African Americans could
move and buy homes. The house my parents bought in the 1960s in a suburb of Minneapolis had such
a restrictive covenant. These issues account for why African-American college students carry so
much more debt than white college students and there is such a huge disparity of income between
Caucasian and African-Americans in the country. Most students never learned about the Tulsa
massacre that occurred in the 1920's nor the extent of violence against African-Americans in the 20th
century. Most students don't know how implicit bias, which most people don't know that they carry,
leads to African Americans with similar or higher credentials than Caucasian applicants never getting
interviewed for jobs for which they are equally or more qualified than Caucasian applicants. Finally
most Caucasians have no understanding of the day to day experiences of African-Americans, Latin(x),
Native Americans and other diverse communities in terms of subtle and not so subtle racism.

However instead of encouraging and supporting an honest and comprehensive look at history, this bill
would have a chilling effect on college instructors who teach US history or issues related to racial and
ethnic minorities. If you read the fine print of this bill you could be seen as violating the law if you
discuss such concepts as implicit bias, affirmative action or any topics that could lead to students
feeling discomfort, guilt, anguish or 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

This reason this bill would have a chilling impact on instructors and professors who want to present
comprehensive information or engage in a discussion on race is that public colleges and universities
would risk losing 10% of state aid if they are seen as violating the vague provisions of this legislation.

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They would also be subject to civil suits and potentially responsible to pay the attorneys' fees of litigants.

Assembly Bill 413 proposes to address a problem that does not exist. There is no evidence that the University of Wisconsin or Technical College system has ever promoted sex stereotyping or teaching their students or 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 UW or Technical college faculty or staff are teaching their students or employees to hate each other or to hate white people.

I have heard testimony on other bills related to this topic that we need this legislation to prevent indoctrination of students and the promotion of so-called leftist ideology. First of all this is not Communist China which is currently trying to indoctrinate or brainwash the Uyghur people or the Soviet Union, which controlled of all aspects of residents lives. This is the United States of America, which has free speech, a free press and a multitude of sources of information available to any resident. We need to give our college student some credit for being able to sort through all the different information and points of view they receive at college, the media, from their friends and family.

On a personal note, throughout my 29 years with NASW WI, I have served as a frequent guest lecturer at every one of the 16 social work programs in Wisconsin. I have gotten to know almost all the policy professors at these programs and I have never experienced one who was trying to force students into an ideological point of view. All the professors I have worked with have encouraged the expression of different points of view in the classroom. And because we have social work programs in every region of the state we do hear different points of view from the students. In addition, for over 20 years I served as a part-time social work policy instructor and I have always encouraged students to express their point of view and ask questions.

If there are any college instructors or professors that don't encourage and support robust discussion of issues in the classroom and are heavy handed with their students that should be dealt with by Department Chair and the University, not by legislation that would have a terrible impact on college education in Wisconsin.

Again we need to prepare our young people to work and serve as leaders in an increasingly diverse society by fully educating them, not by suppressing information and imposing speech codes.

Please oppose this passage of this bill.

I would be happy to answer any questions

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