



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

207 STATE HOUSE
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

JB PRITZKER
GOVERNOR

January 25th, 2023

To Mr. David Coleman,

As Governor of the great state of Illinois, I have spent every day of the last four years fighting to ensure that every Illinoisan has the same opportunities regardless of the color of their skin, the zip code they live in, or the school they attend. That fight includes the opportunity to learn without the threat of bigotry and hatred guiding lessons plans. I am writing to you today to urge the College Board to preserve the fundamental right to an education that does not follow the political grandstanding of Governor DeSantis and the whims of Republicans in Florida.

Advanced Placement courses are a core part of the high school experience for students wishing to push themselves academically and prepare themselves for college. Each year, over 115,000 public school students in Illinois take AP exams. In 2020, our state ranked number one in the country for largest year-over-year increase of students scoring a 3 or higher on these exams. These passing scores translated into credit at public universities across Illinois and the country, resulting in thousands of dollars in tuition saved, often for those students most in-need of financial assistance. We value Advanced Placement courses in this state and have no doubt as to the efficacy of the program. However, I am extremely troubled by recent news reports that claim Governor DeSantis is pressuring the College Board to change the AP African American Studies course in order to fit Florida's racist and homophobic laws.

Illinois expects any AP course offered on African American Studies to include a factual accounting of history, including the role played by black queer Americans. Illinois will closely examine the official coursework to ensure it includes all necessary history, starting with this nation's foundation built on slavery, the Civil War where this nation reckoned with that history and the decades of rebuilding and efforts of black Americans to continue their fight for equality and equity to this day.

Black history is American History. Many students who will take this class encounter racism on a personal and systemic level long before they reach high school and take their first AP class. For some, a course such as this may be one of the first times they see their own faces and experiences reflected back to them on the page. They deserve the opportunity, alongside their classmates, to learn the honest and accurate history of the nation they live in now. It's often said that we study history so that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. This cannot be achieved when a misleading version of history is taught. If we refuse to teach our next

generation honestly we are bound to repeat old cycles and reopen old wounds—fueling the animus that Governor DeSantis uses to score attention and divisive headlines.

Regardless of some leaders' efforts, ignoring and censoring the accurate reporting of history will not change the realities of the country in which we live. In Illinois, we will not accept this watering down of history. I urge you to maintain your reputation as an academic institution dedicated to the advancement of students and refuse to bow to political pressure that would ask you to rewrite our nation's true, if sometimes unpleasant, history. One Governor should not have the power to dictate the facts of U.S. history. In Illinois, we reject any curriculum modifications designed to appease extremists like the Florida Governor and his allies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JB Pritzker". The signature is stylized and cursive, with the letters "JB" being particularly prominent and connected.

Governor JB Pritzker