



April 6, 2021

House Education Committee
Colorado General Assembly
House Committee Room 0107
200 E. Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

RE: SB21-067 – Strengthening Civics Education

Dear Members of the House Education Committee:

My name is Kathleen Wilson and I am a Volunteer Lobbyist with the League of Women Voters of Colorado. The League is a nonpartisan organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Our membership spans the state of Colorado with 19 local leagues operating in several regions of the state. I am testifying in support of SB 067 on behalf of our state league's legislative action committee.

The League believes first and foremost that democratic government depends upon informed, active participation in government through reasoned decision making. For most citizens, learning about our government begins during PreK-12th grade schooling. Therefore, the League wholeheartedly agrees that Social Sciences, and Civics in particular, should be included in the K-12th grade curriculum. We support the Colorado General Assembly in establishing base level expectations in Civics learning and achievement to ensure consistency and equity in Colorado schools.

Because the Colorado League's efforts focus on the informed actions of our state's citizenry, it is particularly troubling that, as stated in the Bill, there has been "a significant erosion in the infrastructure in schools needed to support strong civics education programs. The results are borne out by students' scores on the most recent national civics assessment test. Less than a quarter of high school students achieved a grade of proficient...". Colorado students and adults need a solid framework of Civics understanding to form reasoned judgments for their actions in their political lives.

Recent events – competitive national and federal elections, the Black Lives Matter movement, the insurrection during the counting of the Electoral College votes and a "return to normalcy" as evidenced by very visible mass shootings – may be conducive to promoting knowledge and

curiosity of civics education, creating a particularly salient time for SB21-067. We are encouraged that the language in the bill promotes “classroom activities through which students model democratic processes and engage in service learning and experiential project-based learning by participating civically in their communities” – engaging complex learning activities that have a lasting impact with students.

Finally, the League is particularly supportive of the requirement in the bill for instruction to include the significant contributions of a much wider range of Colorado’s minority groups than has been included in the past. We believe this content will promote greater understanding and an equity perspective in students across our state.

The writers of SB21-067 mention the impact of the lack of Civics statewide assessment prior to high school graduation as a reason for the disinvestment in Civics education. The League of Women Voters of Colorado is supportive of future legislation, requiring the Colorado Department of Education to include statewide Civics assessment during high school to ensure that our future voters have a firm grasp, a healthy curiosity, and a motivation for civic action and lifelong learning about the workings of government at all levels.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue and we urge you to vote yes on SB21-067.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen M. Wilson".

Kathleen Wilson
League of Women Voters of Colorado
1051 Coral Burst Drive
Loveland, CO 80538