



Nashville & Middle Tennessee

2021-2022

Board of Directors

24 Hour Crisis & Support Helpline 1-800-334-4628 | Textline 615-983-5170

Amanda Weeks-Geveden,
Chair

August 11, 2021

Cynthia Whitfield-Story,
Chair-Elect

Dr. Penny Schwinn, Commissioner
Tennessee Dept. of Education
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, Tennessee 37243

Sharon K. Roberson,
President & CEO

Gail Alexander
Sallie Bailey
Caroline Bradshaw
Louise Brock
Rusty Burdge
Monica Cintado-Scokin

Dear Commission Schwinn,

YWCA Nashville & Middle Tennessee appreciates the opportunity to comment on Public Chapter 493 / Section 51. YWCA has been a part of the Nashville community for more than 120 years. Our mission is eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. As you see, an essential part of our mission is fighting to eliminate racism. We approach this part of our mission by bringing productive conversations to our community on issues that include how racism can detrimentally impact our otherwise prosperous city. YWCA firmly believes that discrimination and bias are unfortunately woven into the everyday practices and policies in some parts of our communities. To create a community where all people are treated with dignity and respect, we must be able to talk about the complex history of racism in this country.

Lara Crouch
James Crumlin
Ashlee Davis
Kendra Deas
Cindy Dempsey
Jamie Dunham
Katharin Dyer
Irwin Fisher
Rashed Fakhruddin
Lisa Ferrelli
David Fischette
Rodney Francis
Charles K. Grant
Janie Greenwood Harris
Joey Hatch
Sean Henry
Latrisha Jemison
Rita Johnson-Mills
Beverly Keel
Candice Lee
Carla Lovell
Rick Martin
Marcia Masulla
Rita Mitchell
Eleanor McDonald
Valerie Smith Molette
Anne Morgan
Jayme Parmakian
Tracey H. Pearson
Abby Rubenfeld
Kristy Sinkfield
D. Billye Sanders
Amber Sims
Amy F. Smartt
Javier Solano
Sunny Spyridon
Kate Wood
Alecia Wynn
Vicki Yates

There is a great deal left to interpretation in the public chapter. However, Tennessee teachers are trained to provide information to students and encourage them to use their cognitive and problem-solving skills. We must trust our experts, the teachers who are trained to lead age-appropriate conversations with their students. Teachers are responsible for teaching students about events that have taken place, whether they are events we are proud of or ashamed of. To build on these skills, the teachers must expose students to accurate accounts of history and be allowed to form their age-appropriate opinions. Teaching the true history of the United States provides a way to understand how racism happens and impacts all of our lives. We do not want to repeat the unfortunate errors of the past. Therefore, we ask that your department not let this law become a cudgel against any Black or white child or any teacher teaching the truth.

I was a child of discrimination in a school system in this very state. I do not want any child, whether Black or white, subjected to isolation and harassment like I was because of how lessons are taught in school. However, if we fail to teach children the truth, the cycle of trauma for all our children will continue. Additionally, as an attorney, I know that teaching truthful United States history is not the same as the legal concepts that are part of Critical Race Theory, CRT. We cannot simply call something CRT when it is not.

The hope is that if we understand the past and how it has impacted our present, we can create a better future for everyone. In this future, all children must learn about our collective history and continue to be productive members of our society. When taught the



24 Hour Crisis & Support Helpline 1-800-334-4628 | Textline 615-983-5170

true history of this country, children will love the country more, not less, because of the ability of this great nation to better itself. Our true history can be taught without damage to any child.

We hope you will consider our comments and concerns and the possible chilling effect that proposed penalties for teaching our state and nation's real history will have on our teachers, and subsequently, our youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon K. Roberson".

Sharon K. Roberson, JD
President and CEO