

NATIONAL
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Civics
Alliance

from NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of SCHOLARS

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Office of the Colorado State Board of Education
201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203

October 13, 2022

Dear State Board of Education,

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) and the Civics Alliance are delighted that Colorado's State Board of Education considered Board Member Debora Scheffel's proposed motion to adopt Civics standards based on *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*, and that the amendment came so close to succeeding.¹ We are particularly grateful to Board Members Steve Durham, Joyce Rankin, and Debora Scheffel for voting to support the amendment, but we thank the entire Board for its thoughtful consideration of *American Birthright*.

We urge Colorado's State Board of Education to reconsider drawing upon *American Birthright* in future sessions, for social studies instruction in general and not just for Civics. For the most part, we believe that *American Birthright* speaks for itself. Yet we wish to address the argument that *American Birthright* is somehow "too extreme for the state of Colorado."² We designed *American Birthright* to appeal to a broad majority of Americans. We chose the *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework* (2003) as our source framework not least because it was developed by a highly reputable team of experts, addressed the concerns of Massachusetts teachers

¹ *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*, Civics Alliance, <https://civicsalliance.org/american-birthright/>.

² Jenny Brundin, "Political rift shows up in Board of Education's vote to veto conservative American Birthright social studies standards," *CPR News*, October 12, 2022, <https://www.cpr.org/2022/10/12/colorado-board-of-education-american-birthright-social-studies/>.

and Education Department staff, and received final approval from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.³

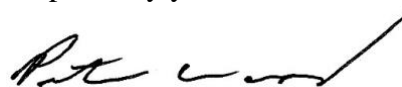
We revised *American Birthright* so that it will also provide social studies standards that satisfy more conservative Americans, but our source framework passed muster in Massachusetts in 2003. Indeed, because *American Birthright* emphasizes rigor, factual knowledge, and primary sources, we believe it does an excellent job of promoting teaching the radical aspects of America's history.

American Birthright's recommended Primary Documents, after all, include John Woolman's *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1754), Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776), the Seneca Falls *Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions* (1848), Frederick Douglass's Independence Day speech at Rochester, New York (1852), Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855), William Jennings Bryan, *The Paralyzing Influence of Imperialism* (1900), the Niagara Movement *Declaration of Principles* (1905), Jacob Lawrence's *The Migration Series* (1941), Franklin Roosevelt, *Four Freedoms* speech (1941), *The Port Huron Statement* (1962), and Martin Luther King's *The Other America* (1967). We are proud to have included centuries of America's radical voices in *American Birthright*.

Students who learn from *American Birthright* will learn about America's radical past as a component of the entire range of America's political traditions—and they will learn that America's radical dreams have always been a part of its whole.

We believe that *American Birthright* provides a broadly appealing and broadly acceptable model for social studies standards. Indeed, we wrote *American Birthright* to do justice to the varying political commitments of a free people, no matter the state's political coloration. We think *American Birthright*, which above all teaches students about their birthright of liberty, equally well suited for every state. We therefore think *American Birthright* well suited for Colorado.

Respectfully yours,



Peter Wood
President, National Association of Scholars



David Randall
Executive Director, Civics Alliance

³ *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework* (2003), <https://www.nas.org/storage/app/media/New%20Documents/2003-08.pdf>.