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Co-Chairs Darling and Thiesfeldt and members of the Senate and Assembly Committees on Education

I am the Executive Director of the Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA) and I am writing on behalf of Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA) members in opposition to SB 411 and AB 411. Our organization represents 167 rural school districts and supports over 235 total members.

It is our belief that SB 411 and AB 411 are too ambiguous in their language and open to much subjectivity which can be dangerous for a classroom teacher. We also feel these bills go against local control and are an attack on academic freedom. These bills will make it very difficult for our teachers to teach many key events in world and US history and current events. How can you not discuss racism or sexism at some level when discussing the following events, to name just a few?

- The Crusades
- The Civil War
- The 14th Amendment Equal Protection Clause
- World War 2 – Besides Nazi Germany, you had the internment of Japanese
- The Holocaust – (Which many of you on this bill were co-sponsors on SB 69 that recently passed)
- The Civil Rights Movement
- The Tulsa Massacre of 1921
- Apartheid in South Africa
- The teaching of cultural norms
- The teaching of sexuality in Human Growth and Development

Our major concern is that it will be very difficult to effectively teach and engage discussion on many of these events in fear that one might violate the intent of these bills because the language is ambiguous and subjective. These bills may cause teachers to gloss over some very critical events in history. In my opinion, as a former educator in both private and public schools, these bills are very dangerous to the future of our society. It is important for young people to understand the negatives of our past and to also see the positives that have come out of some of these events. Learning from these experiences helps us all grow and build a better society. To limit the teaching of these events will only cause us to continue to make the same mistakes again. I have always carried with me a point my father taught me, and I have shared with my children which is *to own up to your mistakes, learn a lesson from the mistake and go forward to help ensure it doesn't happen again*. If these bills are enacted present and future generations will not see the errors of our past and continue to make the same mistakes instead of having the ability to avoid or correct them from happening in the future.

In conclusion, SB 411 and AB 411 may cause more divisiveness in society and be another reason for educators to leave the profession. We need to trust our educators to do what is right and to lead meaningful discussions on crucial issues without fear of repercussions. We ask that you step back and look at these bills from a broader perspective. This country was built on immigration and diversity and that is what initially made this a great country. We ask you oppose SB 411 and AB 411

Thank you for your time and taking my written testimony into consideration.

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Strong Schools, Strong Communities