



June 20, 2024

NJSBA Position Statement
Expressing Concerns
Senate Bill No. 1054 (Greenstein/Gopal)

Requires school districts to provide instruction on labor movement as part of New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies.

The New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), a federation of all of the state's local boards of education, appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback and **express concerns regarding S-1054**. This legislation requires school districts to provide instruction on the labor movement as part of New Jersey Student Learning Standards (NJSLS) in Social Studies.

To be sure, the NJSBA is not fundamentally opposed to the general concept of students learning about labor relations, workers' rights and unionization at an appropriate stage in their education. However, the NJSBA is generally opposed to the Legislature continuing to imposing specific instructional mandates, such as this one, on school districts. We believe determinations over what and when our students should be taught a particular subject matter should be left to the purview of local boards of education and district personnel, the Department of Education, and State Board of Education. The NJSBA also believes that neither the state nor federal government should mandate any new or expanded school curricula, activity, or program unless a compelling need, including its educational value, has been demonstrated.

In recent years, the Legislature has advanced various measures that require districts to provide instruction on specific issues. Examples include requirements to provide instruction on the contributions of the AAPI and LGBTQ communities, information literacy, grief, civics, climate change, and financial literacy. This list is by no means exhaustive. While each of these measures have their merits, and districts are implementing them with fidelity, we believe that the Legislature should exercise caution and restraint in continuing to add to the list of mandates and defer to the trained educational experts charged with developing standards and making curriculum and instruction decisions.

It also important to point out that the current NJSLS, in several ways, already requires students to learn about the concepts captured in S-1054. The following represents a sample of student performance expectations in the NJSLS:

- Evaluate how events led to the creation of labor and agricultural organizations and determine the impact of those organizations on workers' rights, the economy, and politics across time periods.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of labor and agricultural organizations in improving economic opportunities and rights for various groups.
- Explore factors that promoted innovation, entrepreneurship, and industrialization and determine their impact on New Jersey (i.e. Paterson Silk Strike) and the United States during this period.
- Analyze the relationship between industrialization and the rise of democratic and social reforms.

- Use data and evidence to compare and contrast the struggles for women's suffrage and workers' rights in Europe and North America and evaluate the degree to which each movement achieved its goals.
- Compare and contrast socialism, communism, fascism, and liberal democracy, analyze the extent to which they promote and protect civil, political, social and economic rights for people, and explain the reasons for their growth or decline around the world.

As the concepts related to the labor movement are already embedded throughout the learning standards, we believe this bill is unnecessary. We also believe that the legislation in its current form is overly prescriptive (i.e., requires the instruction to include the history of organized labor; notable strikes throughout history; unionization drives; and the collective bargaining process and existing legal protections in the workplace). It is important for districts to maintain flexibility in developing a plan of instruction on how students can master the NJSLS.

For the reasons and concerns cited above, we respectfully request that the bill be **held** and not be approved. Thank you for your consideration of the NJSBA's position on this important issue. Any questions may be directed to Jonathan Pushman, Director of Governmental Relations, at (609) 278-5248 or jpushman@njsba.org.