TO: ALA Executive Board

RE: ALA Statement Addressing Initiatives to Ban "Critical Race Theory"

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:
Information / Action requested – see draft motion

ACTION REQUESTED BY:
Deborah Caldwell-Stone
Office for Intellectual Freedom

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DRAFT OF MOTION:
The Executive Board endorses the "Statement Opposing Initiatives to Censor Information Resources, Curriculum, and Programs Addressing Racial Injustice, Black American History, and Diversity Education," and supports the continued work of a subgroup of the Intellectual Freedom Committee charged with the creation of a toolkit to assist library workers, school librarians, and state and regional chapters in opposing censorship of books, curriculum, and programs addressing racial injustice, Black American History, and diversity education.

DATE: June 30, 2021

BACKGROUND:

On May 18, as part of its discussion on Emerging Issues, the Executive Board agreed to support the Office for Intellectual Freedom's efforts to develop talking points and a toolkit that would provide effective measures to counteract proposed legislation and other initiatives banning the teaching of Black American history, racial injustice, and diversity education under the label of "critical race theory." The proposal for talking points and a toolkit responds to requests from state chapters and local libraries for strategic assistance in addressing legislation, book and curriculum challenges, and local initiatives proposing such bans.

In the intervening weeks, the Executive Board agreed to join the Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism in American History, an effort initiated by American Association of University Professors, the American Historical Association, the Association of American Colleges & Universities, and PEN America.

OIF solicited assistance from the Chapter Relations office, the Office for Diversity, Literacy, and Outreach Services, and Public Policy and Advocacy (State and Local), and members of the Intellectual Freedom Committee. The group has drafted an initial statement, and we seek
endorsement of the statement.

The work to develop a toolkit has proven complex and time consuming and remains incomplete. Additional assistance and advice are needed from school librarians, academics, and public librarians. We ask for continued support for the subgroup's efforts to develop a toolkit that will provide guidance on opposing efforts to censor, ban, or restrict materials or information about racial injustice, Black American history, and diversity education.

Statement Opposing Initiatives to Censor Information Resources, Curriculum, and Programs Addressing Racial Injustice, Black American History, and Diversity Education

[DRAFT, 06/30/21]

The American Library Association is committed to upholding our core values, which include equitable access to knowledge, social justice, and intellectual freedom. As members of a profession committed to free and equitable access to information and the pursuit of truth, we stand firm in opposing any effort to suppress knowledge, to label "controversial" views, or dictate what is orthodox in history, politics, or belief.

At present, efforts to censor any consideration or discussion of racism, slavery, Black American history, and related issues and concerns in our schools, colleges, and universities pose a real and present threat to libraries' ability to fulfill their role as trusted community institutions that provide factual and accurate information that reflects the breadth of the American experience about these topics.

A commitment to intellectual freedom and social justice requires that libraries not only protect the truth from suppression, but also prevent its distortion. Consequently, the American Library Association has joined other educational institutions and civil liberties organizations in opposing any legislative proposal or local initiative intended to ban instruction, consideration, or discussion about the role of racism in the history of the United States, or how systemic racism manifests itself in our schools, workplaces, and government agencies.

ALA member leaders and staff pledge to join with library workers, libraries, and state and regional library associations to oppose any proposal to censor information resources, curriculum, or programs addressing racial injustice, Black American history, and diversity education. We commit to supporting libraries, schools, and universities facing these challenges and to develop tools that will prepare library workers to defend their collections, counter falsehoods, and engage their communities in important conversations about racial injustice and empowering everyone to fully participate in our democratic society.