May 31, 2018

Subject: Questionable Edits to Virginia K-12 Textbooks

Dear Publisher,

On March 22, 2018, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) approved a proposed list of K-12 History and Social Studies textbooks. Your company’s textbooks and teaching guides are among those selected for use in Virginia.

Previous to that date, the VDOE solicited public review and feedback of proposed textbooks. As stated by VDOE:

“The textbook review process places primary responsibility on publishers to ensure the accuracy of their textbooks. Publishers must certify that textbooks submitted for approval have been thoroughly examined and reviewed by qualified content experts for factual accuracy.”

On February 28, 2018, just before the state textbook review period ended, the Jewish Community Federation endorsed and submitted a lengthy and detailed set of changes to the VDOE based on a review conducted by the California-based Institute for Curriculum Services (ICS). ICS also sent its proposed changes directly to publishers in hopes that they would “correct” and “improve” their textbooks “before state adoption.”

The full set of ICS’s proposed changes were obtained and publicly released under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. (Please see the enclosed PR Newswire release.) Unfortunately, it is our view that many of the changes proposed by ICS, if adopted, would degrade, rather than improve, the accuracy of the textbooks and teaching guides.

While not exhaustive, the attached table of seven questionable requested changes provides a strong case against any rushed adoption of factually-challenged, biased and exclusionary ICS recommendations. (Please see the table “Examples of Questionable ICS Edits in Virginia Textbooks.” The table was prepared by the Virginia Coalition for Human Rights).

We, the undersigned, strongly urge you not to incorporate any of these ICS changes until a diverse panel of qualified and nonpartisan academic experts is consulted for feedback. With the beginning of the school year 2018-2019 only three months away, we respectfully request your response to this letter by June 30, 2018. Specifically, please let us know how your company will respond to the serious concerns listed above, and please identify a point of contact within your company with whom we can coordinate directly regarding these concerns. The VCHR point of contact for this issue is Jeanne Trabulsi at jgracet@msn.com, telephone # 540-622-6278.

We thank you in advance for your commitment to providing accurate textbooks to Commonwealth of Virginia students and teachers.
Sincerely,

Paul Nouri and Nancy Wein, Co-chairs  
Virginia Coalition for Human Rights

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