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**Dudley Flood Center for Educational Equity and Opportunity & Public School Forum of North Carolina Statement on Proposed House Bill 187**

**(Raleigh, NC) March 14, 2023** — North Carolina’s Constitution commands that “equal opportunities be provided for all students.” Every student deserves a safe and nurturing learning environment in which they can grow, flourish, and pursue their chosen educational path. The “sound basic education” guaranteed in the state’s Constitution is made possible when students engage in meaningful discussion that recognizes the reality of their lives. When thoughtfully engaged, our students emerge informed, productive, thoughtful, empathetic citizens who will become leaders in their communities and impact positive change.

Through House Bill 187, the General Assembly lays out its intent to recognize “equality and rights for all persons and to prohibit public school units from promoting certain concepts that are contrary to that intent.” Contrary to the name and cited intent of the bill, however, HB 187 would limit educators’ ability to discuss the reality of racism in the United States, would restrict students’ engagement with history and current events, and would hinder districts’ efforts to understand and tackle the root cause of inequities in our schools. We must ask- what problem is actually being solved through this legislation? How does this legislation promote equality when it inherently discriminates against certain groups or topics? The only way to truly achieve equality is to bravely and honestly reckon with our country’s complicated past and present.

This bill would also create an environment of fear, distrust, and disrespect for NC teachers. Educators are licensed, trained professionals and should be trusted with the responsibility to teach and lead in their classrooms and schools. North Carolina is experiencing growing teacher vacancies, with many educators citing the current working conditions as the reasons they are leaving the profession – and this bill would further hinder recruitment and retention efforts across the state. Just as in other states where similar bills have been enacted, educators in NC are facing scrutiny, fear of indoctrination accusations, and pressure to censor themselves. House Bill 187 would create an undue burden and limit the ability of educators to provide students with accurate historical context for many of the current issues we are facing today.

To ensure that our schools can better meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of every student, curriculum and pedagogy must be relevant, engaging, and inclusive of the experiences and perspectives of North Carolina’s diverse student population. Engaging students in critical conversations enables them to analyze, question, and generate solutions to challenging, real world problems which they are experiencing each and every day. By denying our students these opportunities, we also deny them their constitutional right to a sound basic education, and we put them, and our nation at a future disadvantage. We must not deny students this constitutional right simply because these truths are challenging and uncomfortable.