CREW

CITIZENS FOR
RESPONSIBILITY &
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

May 1, 2023

BY EMAIL: desantis.opengov@eog.myflorida.com

Executive Office of Governor Ron DeSantis
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Dear Public Information Officer:

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington ("CREW") makes this request for records from the Executive Office of Governor Ron DeSantis ("Executive Office") pursuant to the Public Records Act, Chapter 119 of the Florida Statutes. This request is for public records in the possession of the Executive Office, which includes its employees, agents, representatives, and any individual or entity acting on behalf of the Executive Office, regardless of the location of those records.

Specifically, CREW requests:

1. All communications from January 1, 2021 to the date this request is processed discussing Critical Race Theory (CRT); African American History, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); Gender Studies/ Gender, Sexuality, and Women's studies; between the Office of Governor Ron DeSantis and the following colleges and universities:

    a. Broward College [email domain: @broward.edu]
    b. College of Central Florida [email domain: @cf.edu]
    c. Chipola College [email domain: @chipola.edu]
    d. The College of Florida Keys [email domain: @cfk.edu]
    e. Daytona State College [@daytonaState.edu]
    f. Eastern Florida State College [email domain: @easternflorida.edu]
    g. Florida A&M University [email domain: @famu.edu]
    h. Florida Atlantic University [email domain: @fau.edu]
    i. Florida Gateway College [email domain: @fgc.edu]
    j. Florida Gulf Coast University [email domain: @fgcu.edu]
    k. Florida International University [email domain: @fiu.edu]
    l. Florida SouthWestern State College [email domain: @fsw.edu]
    m. Florida State University [email domain: @fsu.edu]
    n. Florida State College at Jacksonville [email domain: @fscj.edu]
    o. Gulf Coast State College [email domain: @gulfcoast.edu]

p. Hillsborough Community College [email domain: @hccfl.edu]
q. Hillsdale College (Michigan)- Private [email domain: @hillsdale.edu]
r. Indian River State College [email domain: @irsc.edu]
s. Lake Sumter State College [email domain: @LSSC.edu]
t. Miami Dade College [email domain: @mdc.edu]
u. New College of Florida [email domain: @ncf.edu]
v. North Florida College [email domain: @nfc.edu]
w. Northwest Florida State College [email domain: @nwfsc.edu]
x. Palm Beach State College [email domain: @palmbeachstate.edu]
y. Pasco–Hernando State College [email domain: @phsc.edu]
z. Pensacola State College [email domain: @pensacolastate.edu]
aa. Polk State College [email domain: @polk.edu]
bb. St. Petersburg College [email domain: @spcollege.edu]
cc. Santa Fe College [email domain: @sfcollege.edu]
dd. Seminole State College of Florida [email domain: @seminolestate.edu]
ee. South Florida State College [email domain: @southflorida.edu]
ff. St. Johns River State College [email domain: @sjrstate.edu]
gg. State College of Florida, Manatee–Sarasota [email domain:
hh. Tallahassee Community College [email domain: @scf.edu]
ii. University of Florida [email domain: @ufl.edu]
jj. University of Central Florida [email domain: @ucf.edu]
kk. University of North Florida [email domain: @unf.edu]
ll. University of South Florida [email domain: @usf.edu]
mm. Valencia College [email domain: @valenciacollege.edu]

2. All communications from January 1, 2021 to the date this request is processed between the Office of Governor DeSantis and City Journal Senior Fellow and Contributing Editor Christopher F. Rufo, using but not limited to the following email addresses:
    a. hello@christopherrufo.com
    b. communications@manhattan-institute.org
3. All communications from January 1, 2021 to the date this request is processed between the Office of Governor DeSantis and University of Florida President Ben Sasse, using but not limited to the following email address:
    a. president@ufl.edu
4. All communications from January 1, 2021 to the date this request is processed between the Office of Governor DeSantis and the Board of Trustees at New College of Florida.
5. All communications from January 1, 2021 to the date this request is processed between the Office of Governor DeSantis and the State University System Board of Governors (BOG).
6. All communications from January 1, 2021 to the date this request is processed between the Office of Governor DeSantis and State Board of Education (SBOE).

7. All communications from January 1, 2021 to the date this request is processed between the Office of Governor DeSantis and the College Board.
8. All communications from January 1, 2021 to the date this request is processed between the Office of Governor DeSantis and representatives from non-governmental groups on issues regarding teaching CRT in schools, including but not limited to:
    a. Heritage Foundation [email domain: @heritage.org]
    b. American Legislative Exchange Council [email domain: @alec.org]
    c. No Left Turn in Education [email domain: @noleftturn.us]
    d. 1776 Project PAC [email domain: @1776projectpac.com]
    e. Parents Defending Education [email domain: @defendinged.org]
    f. Speech First [email domain: @athospr.com]
    g. Moms for Liberty [email domain: @momsforliberty.org]
    h. Turning Point USA [email domain: @tpusa.com]
    i. 1776 Action [email domain: @1776action.org]
    j. Presidential Coalition [email domain: @citizensunited.org]
    k. Heritage Action for America [email domain: @heritageaction.com]

The above request excludes agency records consisting solely of news articles, press clippings, and other publicly-available material, so long as the records include no accompanying discussion by agency officials.

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. This request includes any responsive records sent or received by the Executive Office via any private, nongovernmental account, as well as those records maintained, stored or archived in the cloud, on a shared drive, on the internet, via any electronic portal, via social media accounts, by screenshot or any other electronic system or device such as a cell phone, tablet, flash drive, computer or server that is capable of sending, receiving or storing digital information. We seek records of any kind, including paper records, electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, data, and graphical material. Our request includes without limitation all correspondence, letters, emails, text messages, facsimiles, telephone messages, voice mail messages, and transcripts, notes, or minutes of any meetings, telephone conversations, or discussions. Our request also includes any attachments to emails and other records, as well as emails to which the subjects of this request were cc'ed or bcc'ed.

By way of background, on April 22, 2022, Governor Ron DeSantis signed the Stop the Wrongs to Our Kids and Employees (WOKE) Act in an effort to ban Critical Race Theory (CRT) from being taught in Florida schools.[1] This is the latest in measures by the state to prohibit education about the role of systemic racism in America's history. Another example of this is the banning of Nikole Hannah-Jones' "1619 Project," which focuses on slavery and

[1] Gov. DeSantis signs 4 bills, including Stop W.O.K.E. Act, redistricting, special districts, April 22, 2022, *available at* https://www.clickorlando.com/news/2022/04/22/watch-live-at-2-pm-gov-desantis-holds-news-conference-in-south-florida/

its involvement in the formation and development of the United States. In January, Florida Department of Education prohibited the College Board's AP African American Studies class from being taught in Florida high schools. The Department cited concerns of the inclusion of CRT in the curriculum as their reasoning for rejecting the class.[2] In response to the heavy criticism from Governor DeSantis and the Florida Department of Education, the College Board altered the course's curriculum to no longer include mentions of CRT, the queer experience, and Black feminism.[3] These concerns are worrying not only for the impact on the education of American youth, but also because of the ability for non-governmental organizations and individuals to influence the education of American youth to better fit their needs. This undue influence has long-lasting impacts beyond the education system, including the misrepresentation of history and the potential to censor other materials in the classroom based on the whims of biased organizations.

Banning CRT from being taught in Florida schools would hinder the education of students who deserve to be taught an impartial yet comprehensive account of American History that includes diverse viewpoints. The requested records will provide transparency into DeSantis's reasoning for censoring educators by banning the teaching of CRT and rejecting the AP African American studies course. The records will also reveal any potential involvement of non-governmental groups and individuals in the decision-making process and shed light on possible instances of corruption and undue influence.

If it is your position that any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, Chapter 119 requires you to state the basis of the exemption you contend is applicable. Fla. Stat. § 119.07(1)(e). We further request that you state in writing and with particularity the reasons for any conclusion that a record is exempt or confidential. Fla. Stat. § 119.07(1)(f). If some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, Chapter 119 requires you to redact those portions and produce the remainder of the requested records. Fla. Stat. § 119.07(1)(d).

We agree to pay up to $100 for copies of the requested records. If copying fees are expected to exceed this amount, or if you anticipate that "extensive use" of information technology resources or extensive clerical or supervisory assistance as defined in section 119.07(4)(d) will be needed to fulfill this request, please call me me at (202) 408-5565 or email me at [redacted] and foia@citizensforethics.org.

Where possible, please produce records in electronic format. Please send the requested records electronically to [redacted] and foia@citizensforethics.org or by mail to Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, [redacted].

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[2] Juliana Kim, Florida says AP class teaches critical race theory. Here's what's really in the course, NPR, January 22, 2023, *available at* https://www.npr.org/2023/01/22/1150259944/florida-rejects-ap-class-african-american-studies

[3] Anemona Hartocollis and Eliza Fawcett, The College Board Strips Down Its A.P. Curriculum for African American Studies, February 1, 2023, *available at* https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/01/us/college-board-advanced-placement-african-american-studies.html

Please contact me if you have any questions about this request or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records. We anticipate you will fulfill your obligations under Chapter 119. If it is necessary to file an action to enforce the Public Records Act, the court may award reasonable costs of enforcement, including attorneys' fees. Fla. Stat. § 119.12. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Lama Elsharif

Lama Elsharif
Research Associate
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington