To the Board of Education at WSSD,

We, the Racial Literacy Initiative (RLI) at Strath Haven, are petitioning for an African American Studies course to be added as a graduation requirement at Strath Haven High School. This course would consist of, but not be limited to, exploration of the perspectives and texts of Black intellectuals concerning the plight of Black liberation. The course would challenge the typical narrative of race and ethnicity that has often been oversimplified and provide a groundwork for students to develop critical thinking[1] surrounding race. Having a well-rounded curriculum that specifically addresses race develops students into more culturally competent people, actively equips them with inter- and intrapersonal skills that are directly implementable after high school in all fields, and promotes the core idea of learning, which is to question everything. By signing this petition, individuals display community support for this course to be created and implemented.

CLICK HERE TO SIGN THE PETITION.

[1] "researchers have documented that students' exposure to other students who are different from themselves and the novel ideas and challenges that such exposure brings leads to improved cognitive skills, including critical thinking and problem solving. *The Century Foundation* "https://tcf.org/content/report/how-racially-diverse-schools-and-classrooms-can-benefit-all-students/?session=1

Racism exists in our daily lives, regardless how aware we are of it. While continuing to address and attack the systemic issues of the world, we can improve our individual spaces, particularly Wallingford Swarthmore School District, to make it positive and uplifting for students of color. All students deserve to feel safe in their school environment, not tokenized, excluded, or underrepresented in their predominantly white classrooms[2], sports teams, extracurriculars, etc.. as many Black students have felt[3]. Racism, directed at Black and non-white community members, is an issue we need to address, decry and actively work against as a community; in doing that, we can learn to acknowledge, celebrate, and protect our BIPOC students.

Without proper acknowledgment of, and direct action to carry out the work our district has to do in becoming anti-racist[4], our student and faculty body will not have the background to understand and contextualize the injustices present both inside and outside our community. They will not have the vocabulary to express ways to end these injustices, nor the conviction to take a part in this dismantling process.

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[2] See "Percent Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity" under Wallingford Swarthmore-SD *Future Ready PA Index* https://futurereadypa.org/District/FastFacts?id=136051148052018045160109034235173077177234103127

[3] https://www.instagram.com/blkathaven/

[4] "Being antiracist is fighting against racism. Racism takes several forms and works most often in tandem with at least one other form to reinforce racist ideas, behavior, and policy." **The other forms being individual racism, interpersonal racism, institutional racism, and structural racism.** *National Museum of African American History and Culture* https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist

With the creation and implementation of this class, the RLC endeavors to provide all students at Strath Haven a designated classroom space to thoroughly understand the political, economic, and social impact Black people have had and continue to have in the US and what role race has played in the policies and social practices that have created modern day America. We also set out to showcase the often underrepresented voices often left out in the discussions of great Black thinkers and fixtures of culture throughout the public school curriculum, fleshing out a much more intersectional, and thus accurate, representation of the narrative and important aspects of Black history.

Having this course as a graduation requirement is critical to having a school dedicated to "assuring the academic achievement and personal growth of all students" by "provid[ing] students with the skills to succeed in a changing global environment."[5]. We also understand that having this course is not the entirety of the solution or an end to critical discourse surrounding the development of anti-racisst culture at Strath Haven. We fully intend to bring this course into fruition while continuously working with the district in other ways to create a school environment that reflects diversity, equity and inclusion.

In solidarity,

[5]See 'Mission Statement" and "Vision" https://www.wssd.org/domain/3