

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322
State and Local Government Committee
Alice Allen
9/21/21

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Rep. Kelly, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit my testimony. My name is Alice Allen. I am a parent in Rocky River, and I strongly oppose HB 322.

When I look at the makeup of the State and Local Government Committee, I see lots of smiling white faces. Complexions that match the majority of my neighbors in the middle class suburb where I have been a lifelong resident. To me, that means we have to work extra hard to make sure our students have a full, robust understanding of historical and current events. HB 322 would be an embarrassing roadblock for Ohio if it were allowed to proceed through the House.

I oppose HB 322 because its passage would restrict our students to learning a narrow “state-sponsored” view--and that should be a concern for all of us, regardless of the views we hold. It would undermine the expertise of Ohio teachers, and would harm our communities by validating close-minded opinions. The fact is we live in a global society, and our students deserve to have conversations about topics that might be difficult, but that will ultimately help them live with those different than them. For me, if my child is feeling some type of discomfort, then that means I know they’re learning and growing. This is true for the youngest preschooler, and for adult learners in a higher education setting as well.

As educated individuals yourselves, it seems you should understand that the practice of debate with others has been around for millenia, and has been used by some of the greatest societies to craft and mold young minds, including those in our beautiful, diverse state of Ohio. How dare a group of state legislators presume to dictate the content of our communities’ classrooms as HB 322 proposes.

When I think of public school, I expect my child’s education in the classroom to complement what I’m teaching at home. For me and the community members I know in Ohio, that education should emphasize how to be good citizens in a global, diverse society, which includes difficult discussions on historical and current events. How else will my child hope to understand those different from them, who have different lived experiences, different genders and sexualities, different races and ethnicities? Learning how to embrace others’ differences with truth and love and care and respect is, I think, a hallmark of a comprehensive education. What better way is there to do such a thing than to understand, through study, and dialog, and perhaps debate, the historical path marginalized citizens have forged before us, and the exploration of our fellow community members’ current struggles at home and around the world?

HB 322 is, at its basis, a bill that touts narrow views, views that are contradictory to the values held by me and the Ohioans I know.

As members of the Ohio House of Representatives, you are truly in a unique position to reinforce with our students how we may move forward together as a society, not by denying or repressing or ignoring difficult topics, but through direct conversation with peers in a setting guided by educational experts.

I strongly urge you to consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and ask that you vote NO on this bill.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,
Alice Allen