

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: September 21st, 2021

Name: Duane Moore

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): _____

Position/Title: _____

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 322 & HB 327

Specific Issue: Bills on controversial issues & divisive concepts in schools

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 5 minutes

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

I contend that the proposed legislation is harmful to social studies instruction generally and elective African-American history courses specifically. These bills undermine student learning & educational opportunity as well as the viability of historically factual elective social studies coursework in Ohio schools.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

Good afternoon Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Duane Moore. I have been a high school social studies teacher at Hamilton High School and instructor of African-American History for twenty years. I am deeply opposed to HB 322 & HB 327 both individually and taken together.

I am concerned about the consequences of these bills for Social Studies education in the state of Ohio. More pointedly, I am deeply concerned about the *chilling effect* these bills will have on the viability of elective curricula such as African-American History, as well as its ability to grow in places where local school districts respond to the desires of their community and students for these courses.

Specifically, two sections of these bills - HB 327 section 3313.6027 division (B)1 [banning instruction of divisive concepts for course credit] and HB 322 section 3313.6028 division (B) [banning the “inculcation” of listed concepts/effects] - pose the problem. This is not because I, nor any other teacher, would be advancing political agendas or harming students through a course curriculum. These bills will render such electives useless for graduation and therefore a waste of valuable school resources. Also, *the very perception by parents or others extraneous to the class* would inevitably make its existence, much less its instruction, difficult. I base this assertion on long experience.

Over my time teaching African-American history, I grew those classes until they were the most widely taken electives in the high school. Therefore, I had students of every race and ethnicity participate in that class over time. Often I had more white students than blacks sitting in the classroom.

In moments of candor, several white students have told me that, simply upon learning they were taking my class, a parent or relative would ask them, “why are you taking a class that’s going to make you feel bad about being white?” For the record, no student who has ever told me this said they felt that way in my classroom. However, people wholly removed from the learning environment have held negative beliefs and suspicions toward these curricula. Those same sentiments share much in common with the spirit of this legislation.

Even more striking have been the students for whom taking my African-American History class was a **profound secret** kept from their parents for fear of punishment. In nearly 40 semesters of instruction, I have heard such statements in about 30. One such student’s story is dominant in my mind.

I still live in my hometown and taught at my alma mater for 20 years. Early in my career, when I was only 9 or 10 years removed from being a student myself, my class was going over a lesson on extralegal violence against Blacks and the work of the Ku Klux Klan in African-American history class. Students considered this information part of a distant past until I told them that there were still KKK marches in Hamilton when I was a student and that the last one occurred in

1997, squarely in their own lifetime. While discussing Klan activity and racially motivated violence locally, I told them a story from my high school.

A black boy who was a high school freshman in 1991 (and whom I knew) was shot to death in broad daylight by a grown man who was the son of the local Grand Wizard of the KKK. It happened after school, following a brief verbal altercation between the grown man and the boy as the boy walked home from school. The man went in the house to get a gun. The black boy was shot in the back while walking away. The man went back in his house and waited.

After telling students about the community reactions and school environment during that time, I noticed that one of my seniors was unusually quiet. I had come to know her and her classroom demeanor rather well the previous semester while she was taking US government with me. She was usually bright and jovial with a sharp wit. I saw that she began to rock back and forth as I answered other student questions.

Since this was completely uncharacteristic of her, I asked if she was OK. Shakily, she responded that the man in the story I had just told, the one who shot the boy in the back, was her uncle. It was her father's younger brother whom they still went to visit in jail. In other words, I had the **granddaughter of the local Grand Wizard of the KKK sitting in my African-American History class**, electing to learn information and perspective radically different from what she'd always been told.

Teachers operate on a simple belief: that when you know better, you will do better. Whether that always bears out or not, students deserve opportunity. These pieces of legislation threaten to remove the opportunity for students to pursue their own interests in making themselves more complete and well-rounded citizens, capable of working productively in this great American experiment of forging "a more perfect Union."

Thank you for your time today.

Duane Moore, M. Ed.