

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: September 21, 2021

Name: Bear F. Braumoeller

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): The Ohio State University

Position/Title: Professor

Address: 2168 Derby Hall, 154 North Oval Mall

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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 327

Specific Issue: Prohibit teaching, advocating, or promoting divisive concepts

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.)

Will your testimony be written, spoken, or both? Written

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

I would urge the committee to vote against this bill, and any other bill that puts the state in the position of regulating the ideas that are discussed in higher education. Freedom of individual speech and expression, regardless of content, are more important considerations than all but the most compelling and immediate interests of the state.

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.

Opponent Testimony on HB 327
Ohio House State and Local Government Committee
Sept. 21, 2021

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Bear F. Braumoeller. I am a faculty member at Ohio State University, though I rarely teach or research anything that would be touched on by the content of this bill. I write to you as an Ohio voter whose family's affiliation with the Republican Party stretches back across generations, and I address myself particularly to the Republican members of the Committee.

I strongly oppose House Bill 327.

At a superficial level, the bill's provisions are mostly unobjectionable. I agree wholeheartedly, for example, that no "nationality, color, ethnicity, race, or sex" is inherently superior to another. Far more objectionable, however, is the idea that the state should regulate speech, especially in higher education. Ideas cannot be defeated if they cannot be confronted. Republicans have long championed the free exchange of ideas in education and derided liberal "snowflakes" who seek content regulation in the form of safe spaces and trigger warnings. Conservatives have often repeated a quote attributed to Voltaire: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." The Republican Party of 2021 is, of course, in flux, but that makes it even more important to stand on the firm ground of principle. This bill flies in the face of many decades of Republican principle.

It also rests on an inaccurate picture of the children and grandchildren of the state of Ohio. As someone who engages with them often in the classroom, I can tell you firsthand that they're terrific. They are smart, they are passionate, they are engaged citizens, they are fully capable of debating big issues, and they are not afraid of ideas that challenge their beliefs. I realize that, to many of you, today's students were in diapers not long ago. But you've done well. You've raised young people who have earned my respect. I would urge you to extend to them that same respect by not regulating the questions and ideas that they are allowed to debate in the classroom.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Bear F. Braumoeller