

Chairman Wiggam, Vice chairwoman John, Ranking Member Representative Kelly, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Henley Mueller. I am a high school junior in Columbus, Ohio. I am strongly opposed to Bill 327.

I am standing here today, fighting against a bill that has sparked many emotions in my mind; unease, determination, and most importantly, fear. The unease came primarily, and the fear settled deep within me only recently. My introduction to these bills was only brief, and yet I immediately agreed to help my fellow peers and educators in protecting honesty in education.

I started by gaining knowledge on this bill in its individuality. I learned how it was similar and how it was different from other bills like it. I educated myself on both sides of the story, why people supported the bill and why others didn't. In the end, I continued to support the people who opposed these bills.

My education is definitely a part of me and my personal identity. I relish in the knowledge that the information taught in my school district by many of my teachers includes the entire truth. It is fundamentally important for students of all ages and backgrounds to have access to an education built from honesty and integrity. I look forward to learning about topics regarding pieces of our history that put a spotlight on our flawed past, and yet I have never felt like these topics and the conversations that result from them are an attack on myself or my origins. Strength for not only our state, but our country will come from acceptance and acknowledgement of all pieces of history. We have reached a point in society and history where conversations regarding race in the past, present and future should be inclusive and pertain to everyone, and yet here we are today, narrowing down topics and conversation so that only the sparkling pieces of our history remain.

Additionally, the students and children attending school and receiving an education today are the generations of the future. This bill is incredibly damaging to people of color who will lose the representation they fought to receive. Imagine how terrifying it would be as a young person entering the real world and not having knowledge on the history of this country and the way it has shaped our world today. The future generations of Ohio will rely on the information learned today, and that includes all information. This bill is a threat to students, families and schools in Ohio.

I ask you to consider my testimony and say no to these detrimental bills.