



Testimony for House Bill 103

State Representative Tracy Richardson, District 86

Primary and Secondary Education Committee

May 2, 2023

Chairman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 103 alongside my colleague Representative Jones.

We are American. What does it mean to be American? This is the question we want our children to be able to answer. The answer needs to be honest. It is not a political question. Rather, it is a way for ALL to acknowledge the values that founded our country. This bill provides an opportunity to preserve, to teach and to cherish American values.

I am proud and grateful that I was born in our great country and that I get to live in the wonderful state of Ohio! The realization of this gift is principally what motivated me at 18 years of age to enter the armed forces. My commitment then and still today is to preserve, protect and defend us and our values reflected in the Constitution.

Our social studies standards are the means and the vessel by which we in Ohio ensure our children understand the values that founded a great nation. Our standards should also teach the challenges faced in preserving it.

We are indeed a unique country... To be an American is to have extraordinary blessings. In America, we understand that we are born with inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That these rights are NOT endowed upon us by our own means as human beings but rather by the power of our creator.

Our US Constitution and our Ohio Constitution are the very documents that secure the foundation of our government. The flag is a powerful symbol representing our values and it unites us as we recite our Pledge of Allegiance. If we do not cherish these things, we risk losing them.

I know many are very articulate and will try to debate this bill with political discourse. Unfortunately, this kind of discourse has been the struggle of recent times. The result is disharmony, dysfunction, and quite frankly, social upheaval.

At times like these we should ask ourselves what unites us and what is the role of government? To properly answer the question, we turn to the Constitution. Again, our role is to secure our inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Understanding these rights via education helps to secure them.

So what does all of this have to do with our bill? The bill provides a means to review the Social Studies standards in Ohio. A 9-member task force will meet and welcome public input as they review Ohio's Social Studies Standards. As directed by House Bill 103, the task force will use "American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards," as a guide. The task force must also keep Ohio's Founding Documents curriculum in place. American Birthright teaches students to identify the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and self-government. It requires students to assess the extent to which civilizations have fulfilled these ideals; and describe how the evolution of these ideals in different times and places has contributed to the formation of modern American ideals.

Or, to state it simply, the goal of the task force is to ensure that the standards are clear and will teach our children essential fundamentals of Americanism. Once the task force has completed its review, it will make formal recommendations to the General Assembly for approval.

Chairman Bird and all members of the Committee, House Bill 103 will provide clarity and consistency of social studies instruction. The hope of Ohio is our children, and I sincerely thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this bill.