

Chairman Bird, Vice Chairwoman Fowler, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of House Bill 103. My name is Alex Nester and I'm an Ohio native working as the political director of PDE Action. We're a nonpartisan organization working to restore a quality education for all students.

Today, I write to you in support of House Bill 103. This bill would create a social studies taskforce for Ohio that would create history and civics standards based on the academically rigorous *American Birthright* scope and sequence, linked [here](#) for further reading. This is a vital matter given alarming statistics that the National Center for Education Statistics released earlier this month. The group found that just [13 percent of American eighth graders meet basic proficiency standards](#) in history. Instead of working to improve student performance in social studies, schools have unfortunately used history and civics lessons to push divisive views about American history and our founding principles.

Ohio is not immune to this problem. [Gahanna-Jefferson City Schools](#) in 2020 committed to reviewing its curriculum “through an antiracist and social justice lens” and “reexamine how we frame our nation’s history.” During a teacher training session, [Mentor Public School](#) teachers were encouraged to “become co-conspirators while using a curriculum rooted in whiteness.” The presentation called out “students from communities with white privilege,” saying these students in particular need to hear diverse perspectives to “grow their thinking.”

It is vital for students to learn about our history from a variety of historical perspectives and experiences. It's also important for students to learn about America's failures—including slavery and segregation, the treatment of Native Americans, and Japanese internment. Assuming students have race-based “privileges,” however, only divides us further.

The *American Birthright* would set a high bar for Ohio's students and teach them a balanced view of American history. The *American Birthright*:

- Sets a rigorous, robust standard for teaching history and civics that focuses on primary source documents and historical facts.
- Gives students the tools they need to make their own judgements about American and World history.
- Promotes a depoliticized version of American history. Students are taught about America's failings to live up to its founding principles: “The reality that many

Americans at some point were denied liberty and equality will be given due attention and placed in the appropriate historical context.”

- Is a sequence and scope, not a curriculum. This provides flexibility to districts and individual teachers.

It's vital that our students learn an accurate and robust telling of American history, free from political bias. On behalf of Ohio's students, I urge you to support House Bill 103.

Respectfully,

Alex Nester

Political Director, PDE Action