

HB 103

Opponent Testimony

Primary and Secondary Education Committee

May 2023

Chairwoman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the committee, thank you for taking the time to read my testimony today. I received my PhD in Educational Policy Studies in 2005. I currently serve as a professor of education at the University of Cincinnati (though I am not officially representing the university today).

Respected for my work on citizenship education, I was commissioned by the National Academy of Education to author a major national report on how to improve civics education and another on the future of citizenship education by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2021. I have published many books and articles about citizenship education and the qualities of a well-functioning democracy.

I was raised to support Republican values, including pride in my country and the hard work ethic to further improve it. I recognize the importance of citizenship education and believe that high quality standards are important for achieving it. But, this bill is not the best way to ensure quality civic learning. I urge you to vote no on HB 103 because it:

- *Lacks sufficient justification.* The sponsors of this bill have suggested that the current standards are vague and not rigorous. But, they have failed to point out how Ohio's standards are lacking relative to those of other states or how they are impacting civic outcomes or the civic behavior of graduates. Full implementation of the current standards was not set to be implemented and assessed until the 2020-21 academic year, which was derailed by the pandemic. There is insufficient evidence for the need to revise the standards now.
- *Leads to more inconsistency.* Introducing another round of standards on a shortened timetable is frustrating to teachers who have been working hard to develop effective curricula aligned with the current standards. Constant churn is time-consuming, expensive, and exhausting for our hard-working educators.
- *Introduces greater political influence in schools.* Even if there was sufficient reason to revisit the standards now, the procedure outlined in this bill invites significantly greater political influence. Enabling politically partisan officials with a vested interest in partisan outcomes to maintain their positions or party control to select the members of the standards board should be alarming to people of all affiliations.
- *Employs partisan materials.* Even more concerning, this bill lays out a specific guiding document from the National Association of Scholars to be used as a foundation for the new standards. This organization is highly partisan. Even if you agree with the organization, you should be concerned with presenting such a limited perspective of our democracy. There are far more trustworthy recourses that have greater support across the political spectrum than the report of this organization. I would be happy to share resources with you that have been carefully crafted by teachers working alongside scholars of history, law, economics, geography, and politics, and informed by members of the public, parents, and employers.
- *Risks worsening our standards.* Writing quality standards is hard. Turning over this work to a panel who lacks classroom experience or subject matter expertise opens up more problems than it solves, including the potential for standards that are not accurate, are not aligned to key assessments, and are not written in ways that are useful for teachers and curriculum designers to effectively create lessons to fulfill them.

HB 103 is not an effective way to achieve quality citizenship education in our state. Please vote no.

Respectfully,
Dr. Sarah Stitzlein
University of Cincinnati