

Committee Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler, Ranking Member Robinson, and other members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, I appreciate your consideration of my written testimony.

As a more than 20 year veteran American History teacher at Elyria High School, I am firmly opposed to House Bill 103 which seeks to establish a committee of legislators to “develop new social studies academic standards for use beginning with the 2024-2025 school year” based on standards published in "American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards.”

In September of 2022, the National Council for the Social Studies commented on the use of these standards, saying “we view these suggested standards as an attempt to return to a time when United States social studies classrooms presented a single narrative of U.S. and Western history that glorified selected aspects of history while minimizing the experiences, contributions, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples, people of color, women, the LGBTQIA+ community, the working class, and countless others.” The NCSS is a thoughtful, professional, academic group, representing experts in their field, who are concerned about the legitimacy, depth, and complexity of education in the Social Studies.

From my perspective, this bill and these standards will significantly hamstring my ability to successfully teach American History to young people in Elyria. When students cannot see themselves reflected in their own history, that history is rendered essentially meaningless. My students are children of the working class, people of color, women, and members of other historically marginalized groups who would be ignored by the standards represented in this bill. As a matter of fact, most Ohio students are members of these groups.

I realize that there is a component in the bill that allows for “public comment” from education stakeholders. I don’t want to sound ungrateful, but I have participated frequently in opportunities for input on education policy in Ohio. Under former Superintendent DeMaria, I was among the majority of stakeholders who met and informed the state that standardized testing was excessive and needed to be minimized. We were essentially ignored. When the American History standards were last revised, I participated at every stage, and was among a vast majority of American History teachers who agreed that components of the standards were redundant, out of context, and in need of removal from the course. We were ignored. I have little faith in a promise to allow for public input.

I would ask that you please take these things into consideration as this bill is being heard and discussed. Consider the position of the NCSS and myself. More importantly consider the students in your districts, your constituents, who have not necessarily been among history’s “winners,” and would largely be ignored by these standards.

Thank you.

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