

May 16, 2023

Chair Bird, Vice-Chair Fowler, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

I am grateful for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Debra Johnson. For over 25 years I was a preschool teacher in a public school. I also volunteered to tutor students in the elementary grades. I want to share my perspective as a past educator and concerned, involved citizen of Ohio.

I am concerned about House Bill 103 and the possible adoption of the American Birthright Standards. I question why these standards were chosen. Were improvements to Ohio's own current standards taken into consideration? I looked at the Coalition responsible for these standards and saw few names of Ohioans or Ohio Professional educators or community members.

I have compared the current Ohio Social Studies Learning Standards and the American Birthright Standards in the early grades. I am concerned when I see limited skill development: skills which students need to practice in order to succeed and thrive in their communities and in our state. Having a good, solid knowledge base of all our shared history, our geography, shared values, style of government and economics go hand in hand with the skill set to implement good decision-making.

Good governance necessitates having well-informed citizens; ones who can check sources of information for veracity. It also means taking another's perspective to be a good, caring citizen.

I see the American Birthright Standards as having limited content and skill learning. This will have a negative impact on Ohio's students' abilities to cooperate, problem solve, and participate in information-based discussions about our state's current and future challenges.

As a teacher, who was in the classroom during the pandemic, I can attest that our children need the concepts and skills inherent in critical thinking to inform and enhance their connections to their communities and their state and the nation.

Were these standards vetted by Ohio educators and community members?

I can not support the American Birthright Standards.

Sincerely,

Debra Johnson

