

Good afternoon. My name is Trevor Rhodes, and I am a former K-12 educator, a curriculum writer for a public historical organization in Ohio, and an adjunct professor of history and education for Mount Vernon Nazarene University. I was born here in the United States to two evangelical K-12 teachers, one a history teacher and the other an Army veteran. In other words, I have seen and experienced firsthand many of the facets of the K-12 education system as it pertains to social studies. It is with that experience that I am testifying today on HB 103. I would like to do so briefly from each of those aspects of social studies education I have engaged with – as a K-12 social studies teacher, a curriculum writer, a historian, a professor of pre-service teachers, and as a parent.

First, let us acknowledge why we ostensibly are all here today: to craft the best K-12 education system in the United States. Let us remember the Golden Rule of Education – if it does not allow our children the chance to explore, then it must be jettisoned, for as any child development expert will tell you, exploration *is* education for a child's mind.

As a former K-12 social studies teacher I have witnessed firsthand several iterations of the Ohio social studies standards. Although none were perfect, they were comprehensive enough for me to weave together the story of America, warts and all. Most importantly, they allowed children the chance to explore their local roots, to voice their fears and frustrations, and to overcome obstacles at their own pace. Our job, as educators, is to keep the guardrails in place. But hem those guardrails in too much, and children are no longer exploring a room full of possibility; they're in a queue. HB 103's standards are that queue, superfluous to a child's education, and in many respects are antithetical to a curious mind.

As a historian, these standards are not just poor, but factually false in many respects! If we are to truly teach the breadth and depth of American history, one would assume, for example, that there must be in the standards a discussion of the plight of American Indian tribes from exploration through the present day. There is not. In fact, there is no mention of teaching *any* of our Ohio tribe's history, and literally none on their removal. As the Legislative Assembly has championed our first World Heritage site at Newark Earthworks, they also erase those very people from our past. Instead, teachers are required to teach folk tales and myths of American history. I can tell you as a teacher nothing is harder than re-teaching the correct history – that the poem Paul Revere's Ride is nothing like the actual event, or that George Washington and the Cherry Tree is made up. HB 103 is poor history, incomplete and misinterpreted.

As a curriculum writer, these standards also force us to consider whether we can even meet the impossible standards set by HB 103. In Florida where America's Birthright standards have been passed, mere mention of the term "social justice," "Black Lives Matter," or "taking a knee" led to those curricula not being adopted. Ladies and gentlemen, how can we use the past to inform our present when even *using* the term BLM leads to cancellation? Have you tried to teach a current event before? Moreover, it dampens potential solutions to our current hyper-partisan politics surrounding education. For example, my organization is currently working on a curriculum to help bridge the distrust between parents, teachers, and administrators by giving each a voice in their child's education on controversial issues. We use primary sources to address current event topics and explain how said topics came to be, and why they are controversial. Parents teach their students their values on said topics, while we provide a bevy of resources for both teachers and parents to help navigate difficult issues. A curriculum like, this *designed to turn down the temperature surrounding social studies*, would likely be shunned under HB 103.

As a professor of pre-service teachers, the chilling effect of these sorts of bills cannot be understated. Most of my pre-service teachers are leaving the profession before it even begins out of fear of losing their career due to a single angry parent email. Veterans have left the field in droves. At a time when we already have a teacher shortage, is the committee's belief that we should adopt HB 103 a wise decision?

Finally, as a parent I will leave the committee with one final concept: the Streisand Effect. Have we heard of this one? It is the psychological phenomenon that by attempting to remove or censor information, it actually leads to an increased awareness of said information. Kids are living embodiments of the Streisand effect. When we tell students that they aren't allowed to learn certain things in the classroom because they are taboo, those students become well versed in those subjects! If HB 103 passes, there is a very high chance that it will have the unintended effect of creating a generation of Ohioans better educated in the very concepts that it seeks to hide.

I strongly oppose HB 103 and urge this committee to vote against it. Thank you.