



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

My name is Lucas George and I am a current 8th grade teacher at Lakeview Junior High in Pickerington, Ohio. In my career, I have taught all grades 7-12 and have instructed inclusion, on-level, honors and college level courses. I am a product of Wittenberg University and the Ashland University MAHG program. Furthermore, in 2019 I was selected as the Ohio Council for the Social Studies Emerging Leader of the Year and as a James Madison Fellow, being 1 of 52 teachers in the country selected for this honor. Most recently, I was awarded the 2022 Gilder Lehrman Ohio History Teacher of the Year, being one of the youngest in state history to achieve this accolade. Currently, I am the Legislative Liaison for the Ohio Council for the Social Studies and serve on its executive board.

HB 103 represents a dangerous precedent to set for designing social studies curriculum in Ohio and I am in strong opposition to this bill in several different capacities:

First, I find it is concerning that we are basing our entire social studies framework off of curriculums that are more than 20 years old. By its own admission, American Birthright's main sources are the 2003 Massachusetts History and Social Sciences Curriculum Framework and Indiana's 2001 Academic Standards for Economics and Government. As someone who sits through many professional developments and training across the country, I can tell you that social studies teaching is constantly changing, innovating, and developing new best practices. Why is a curriculum built by Ohio teachers, students, and parents 5 years ago being replaced by those from a different state that can be considered outdated? For an ever changing world of education, we need an adaptive curriculum to reflect that.

Second, as a member of the Ohio Council for the Social Studies and the National Council for the Social Studies, we find it concerning that our legislature would allow a curriculum to continue that has received no backing from any professional teaching organization. At both levels, we have dedicated teachers who are committed to teaching history and politics from multiple viewpoints and honoring all perspectives. Both organizations have also worked with representatives from both sides of the aisle because their sole aim is effective social studies instruction. In the state of Ohio, we have an amazing amount of social studies teachers who are experts at their craft. If you were to step into one of the conferences, executive board meetings, or even just talk to a representative, you would see how much they care about the profession.

Third, we have a difficult time grasping how we cannot acknowledge the financial impact this will have on the already overburdened classroom teacher. Teachers have spent years gathering resources, making aligned assessments, and developing lesson plans. Now, they will be expected to change their entire curriculum AND are expected to do hours of unpaid labor to meet these changes? In the state cost for the bill, it proposes that we give \$90,000 to a task force to analyze our social studies standards. There are several institutes across



America at Mount Vernon, Monticello, at the American Revolution Institute, etc. that offer programs that we could send teachers to in order to help us understand our founding and our founding documents better, yet we continue to put money towards pointless changes.

Fourth, one of the greatest benefits to our students in Ohio is our continued investment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses that allow students to earn college credit while still in high school. Especially in our high-poverty and low-income communities, the credit helps offset increasing college tuition rates. Students who are Ohio residents pay an average of \$336 per credit hour for these courses. Average general education courses in Ohio are usually 3-4 credit hours, which can add up to \$1200-\$1500 per course. (<https://educationdata.org>) The American Birthright standards are at odds with the College Board's Advanced Placement course requirements, and will prevent thousands of students from receiving otherwise earned college credit. In 2021 alone, Ohio had 11,909 students take AP United States History, 7,369 students take AP Government and Politics, and 10,644 take AP Human Geography. All of those students could forfeit thousands of dollars in college tuition if teachers are handcuffed to the Civics Alliance curriculum that will likely not align to the College Board curriculum. This could have devastating impacts to families whose students work very hard to obtain college credit in high school and save valuable money for college.

Fifth, Social studies has been limited in elementary education due to continuous budget cuts and high-stakes testing that forces districts to spend more time on ELA, Math, and STEM. How can we expect our elementary school social studies teachers, with so little resources and time, to implement this curriculum? After the legislature voted to suspend the 5th grade Ohio Achievement Assessment in 2010, our higher education community members utilized stratified random sampling to interview 51 elementary school principals in both urban and nonurban settings from across the state on the effects of this legislation. We learned more than half (54%) of the principals reported reductions in social studies instructional time in their buildings in response to this action. Instead of changing to a curriculum that requires no skills and lacks the intentional effort social studies education needs to have, we should be focused on the elementary grades that need that foundational social studies instruction the most. On top of everything else our elementary educators have to do, they would now have to adapt to a brand new curriculum, find time in their day to teach it, and do it without the resources and support that other subject areas have.

Sixth, Ohioans are being fed a false narrative that we don't teach the three branches, the founding docs, or the founding principles. These concepts are in the current curriculum & in the Ohio Revised Code section [3301.079](#). With these concepts built in, American History & Government are consistently [our highest scoring state tests among all other subject areas](#). While the recent [NAEP results](#) do provide valuable insight into the need for more investment in social studies education, it should not serve as a metric for what our Ohio social studies teachers are capable of. When the bar was set with the current American History and American Government EOCs, Ohio students unsurprisingly surpassed it with the effective and engaging instruction they were given.



In the opinion of the Ohio Council for the Social Studies and my own personal opinion, there is always room for improvement when it comes to curriculum, standards, and our content; however, we do not agree that HB 103 is the best way to go about it. Our organization would be more than willing to offer expertise, insight, and resources to help build upon the excellent model curriculum we already have in order to help prepare our young citizens to be engaged members of our democracy. American Birthright and this “task force” is not the answer. Bringing Ohio students, educators, parents, and professionals to the table will be the first step in that process and we would eagerly await the opportunity to build this together.

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