

**VOTE NO ON HOUSE BILL 103!**  
**Testimony by Campaign for Our Shared Future**

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

At the Campaign for our Shared Future (COSF), we believe that every American needs to understand our complete and true story as we move forward. That is what sets our country apart. Unfortunately, HB 103 would ensure Ohio's children do not learn the true and complete history of our country – both the good and the bad. HB 103 would rob Ohio's children of a quality education.

**HB 103 plays political games with our kids.** This bill allows politicians to decide who develops Ohio's social studies standards. Most Ohioans are sick of the politicians using children to score political points. Age-relevant instruction on the history of our country ensures that our children have the best foundation for their future. Families and teachers should work together to support our children locally – faraway politicians should stay out of education.

**HB 103 teaches students *what to think, not how to think.*** American Birthright standards are about memorizing names, dates, and facts – rather than inquiry, analysis, and civic engagement. That's why the National Council for the Social Studies says these standards “would have damaging and lasting effects on the civic knowledge of students and their capacity to engage in civic reasoning and deliberation.”<sup>i</sup> Schools should teach independent thinking so that our children can think for themselves, handle challenging topics, and become successful in this country.

**American Birthright standards are too extreme for Ohio.** These standards omit Juneteenth – a new federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery in the United States. Making matters worse, the New York-based politically motivated coalition Civics Alliance, which publishes the American Birthright standards, contributed to social studies standards in Virginia that explicitly omitted Martin Luther King Jr. in the early grades.<sup>ii</sup> This is a slippery slope. If we ban teaching slavery and Martin Luther King, Jr., will we ban Abraham Lincoln next?

**HB 103 is yet another attempt to ban books.** It is no coincidence a district recently made the news for banning a book from an English course due to lack of “alignment” with American Birthright standards.<sup>iii</sup> When books are being banned, our kids aren't learning the complete and true story of America. When libraries and schools are forced to only teach one version of America, they aren't teaching about America at all.

No other state has adopted American Birthright standards – and for good reason. Teaching history to kids is vitally important because it teaches independent thinking and respect for others, which helps us make moral progress as individuals and as a country. HB 103 would prevent students from learning from the past in order to forge a better future. That is why we urge you to heed the advice of historians, educators, students, and families, and not make Ohio’s children guinea pigs. Vote NO on HB 103.

Sincerely,

*Heather Harding*

Executive Director of the Campaign for Our Shared Future

---

<sup>i</sup> NCSS Statement on American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards, September 2022, <https://www.socialstudies.org/current-events-response/ncss-statement-american-birthright-civics-alliances-model-k-12-social>.

<sup>ii</sup> “Department of Education Apologizes, Corrects Virginia’s Proposed History Education Changes Amid Backlash,” *The Virginia Pilot*, November 2022, <https://www.pilotonline.com/news/education/vp-nw-ss-standards-mlk-juneteenth-20221117-z5zl5nzjwbfqdpwk7lsx2svpjy-story.html>; and,

“List Shows Who Provided Input on Youngkin Draft History Standards,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 2022, [https://richmond.com/news/local/education/list-shows-who-provided-input-on-youngkin-draft-history-standards/article\\_a7eb1551-ebf2-5e6a-b4a6-a1c97a8ecb39.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=44444444-4444-4444-4444-444444444444](https://richmond.com/news/local/education/list-shows-who-provided-input-on-youngkin-draft-history-standards/article_a7eb1551-ebf2-5e6a-b4a6-a1c97a8ecb39.html?eType=EmailBlastContent&eld=44444444-4444-4444-4444-444444444444).

<sup>iii</sup> “Woodland Park School District RE-2 Pulls Course Material after Critical Race Theory Complaint,” *The Gazette*, January 2023, [https://gazette.com/premium/woodland-park-school-district-re-2-pulls-course-material-after-critical-race-theory-complaint/article\\_947ed1ea-a0fa-11ed-8071-27317b72a21a.html](https://gazette.com/premium/woodland-park-school-district-re-2-pulls-course-material-after-critical-race-theory-complaint/article_947ed1ea-a0fa-11ed-8071-27317b72a21a.html)