

House Bill Number 103
William Boone
Opponent Testimony
Primary and Secondary Education Committee

May 9, 2023

Chairman Adam Bird, ranking member Phillip Robinson and all members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is William Boone and I am an American History teacher at Berea-Midpark High School. I have taught High School Social Studies in the Berea City Schools for twenty five years.

I strongly oppose House Bill #103 for many reasons but I will try to narrow them down to a couple of major issues.

First of all, the proposal of creating a task force appointed by the Governor, President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House to bypass the Ohio State School Board with such a short timetable worries me. Representative Jones, when taking questions during the first reading, indicated it would be members of the General Assembly and the Senate who would be the appointees from the legislative side. What kind of qualifications will they have? I hope ALL of the appointees have experience teaching Social Studies in the classroom. Party affiliation should have no bearing on who gets appointed. Experience and expertise in the field of Social Studies should be the number 1 priority. Representative Brennan seems like a logical choice for a task force like this.

Secondly, I have serious concerns about an outside partisan group like American Birthright being the foundation of any new standards. The second sentence of its "Open Letter and Curriculum Statement" states that "proponents of programs such as *action civics* seek to turn the traditional

subject of civics into a recruitment tool of the progressive left.” Later it states that “action civics is taking over our K-12 civics and history classrooms.” Honestly, I think this group is creating a Second Red Scare paranoia targeting Social Studies Teachers. Representative Jones said himself in his testimony that “the new standards will stand in the way of those who misrepresent America’s origins”. Will we have to take oaths of loyalty to the United States again?

One of the signatories of American Birthright’s Civics Alliance is Christopher Rufo. For those who may not know him by his many appearances on Fox News, he is the conservative activist who probably more than any other person made critical race theory a rallying cry on the right. Rufo has acknowledged twisting hot-button racial issues to achieve his aims. He wrote on his Twitter feed a couple of years ago that “The goal is to have the public read something crazy in the newspaper and immediately think ‘critical race theory.’” His main job now is to act as culture warrior for Governor DeSantis in Florida.

There are many reasons why there is a massive teacher exodus throughout the country and in the state of Ohio. I can’t imagine relying on a partisan outside group to create rigid standards as “guardrails” for our supposedly untrustworthy educators will help with the historically low morale of Social Studies teachers in Ohio.

Finally, Representative Jones brushed off the fact that a brand new End of Course Graduation Exam will need to be created for American History and American Government. This is no small feat. The proposed legislation targeted the 2024-2025 standards to be implemented. New curriculums, resources, textbooks and assessments will need to be created. That is just not enough time if you're going to implement such an enormous amount of standards that are listed in the suggested standards of America Birthright. I also

agree with Representative Brennan's statement during the first hearing that this action will most likely create unfunded mandates for individual teachers and school districts overall.

For these reasons, and many more, I stand in opposition to proposed House Bill 103. Thank you.