



State Representative Latyna M. Humphrey (OH-02)

HB63 Sponsor Testimony

June 20, 2023

Good afternoon Chairman Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and all other members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee. I am here today to talk about HB63, a bill that would require schools to provide classroom instruction on conflict resolution to students in grades K-12.

Conflict is a normal part of life. We all have disagreements with those around us from time to time. How we deal with those conflicts, however, can have a major impact on our lives. Conflict with resolution can solve problems and deepen relationships. Conflict without resolution can lead to intense anger and even violence. It is clear from the rates of violence in our society that not everyone has the ability to resolve conflicts in productive ways. This bill will require that schools give students the knowledge and skills to diffuse conflicts and resolve differences amicably.

From the research that I've found with regard to the major school district within my House district— Records with the Columbus Division of Police show that between January 2019 and June 6, 2022, there have been 127 reports of fights at 36 high schools and middle schools in the district. There were also 111 reports of assault and 56 reports of guns found at the schools. Keep in mind, students were not in the building between March 2020 and August 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This information alone is why our office introduced this bill. We also know that some of these issues discussed are not singular to Columbus City Schools but other school districts throughout our state.

Please keep in mind that this bill will apply to city, exempted villages, local school districts, and chartered non-public schools. It will be left to the schools to decide for themselves the appropriate course of study for this material. They will be asked to address the topics of:

- Skills in conflict resolution, including methods of diffusing conflict situations and resolving differences amicably
- The mediation process
- Effective communication
- Establishing and maintaining positive social relationships
- Effectively managing emotions
- Making responsible decisions

- The correlation between conflict and violence, including gun violence

According to the Conflict Resolution Education program report published by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education, conflict resolution programs can reduce violence, vandalism, chronic school absence, and suspension. This training can help students and teachers deepen their understanding of themselves and others and develop important life skills. Skills in negotiation, mediation, and mutual decision making are developed which encourages high levels of citizenship activity. Systems and skills in managing behavior frees adults to concentrate more on teaching and are more effective than punishments such as detention, suspension, and expulsion. So many benefits can occur as a result of giving our children knowledge in how to resolve conflicts peacefully.

As requested by our interested parties at the Ohio Department of Education, we have added amendment 509 to the bill, this amendment clarifies that ODE must identify at least one curriculum or material for each of the required topics listed in **Sec. 3313.6030(B)(1)-(8)**. I understand that it may be difficult for the department of education to find curricula and materials that address ALL the elements of conflict resolution. This amendment will lighten the burden on ODE while still addressing the issue.

Additionally, I am aware that ODE does not have adequate funding to develop training programs for all of their staff. In lieu of this, the amendment also replaces the language in lines 44-50 with a requirement for ODE to develop guidance for districts and schools on how to select training programs to help their teachers provide the instruction.

To wrap this up, I think it is time to have a conversation. Our children are the future of our society and it is important that we as legislators do our duty to ensure that Ohio's children have all the tools necessary to flourish as adults. Violent confrontations have caused so much anguish in our society. Let's act now by using early intervention strategies that are proven to work.

Thank you all for taking the time to consider this legislation, I urge you to please support the passage of HB63.