

Tuesday, October 10, 2023
Ohio House of Representatives
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
House Bill 214, proponent testimony of Amy Kissinger

Chair Bird, Vice Chair Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson, and members of the Ohio House of Representatives Primary and Secondary Education Committee, my name is Amy Kissinger, and I am here to present proponent testimony on HB214.

I have occupied many seats around the table of public education. I have been elected twice to serve on the board of my local school district, been an active volunteer in the schools, and been an employee of the teachers' union. Out of 3,500 school board members statewide, I am one of five to be awarded the distinction of Master School Board Member this year by the OSBA. I am a co-founder of the Ohio School Board Constitutional Coalition, a new school board association in Ohio which exists to give school board members a meaningful chance to actually govern their local school districts.

Just a few years ago, I testified in opposition to the expansion of the voucher system. Regarded as a champion of public education among my colleagues and constituents, I came to ask you to not expand vouchers at the expense of our government schools. However, the more experience I gained as a school board member, I found myself increasingly at odds with the platform required of me as a public education champion. I found myself supporting legislation that I might have opposed previously, such as legislation requiring the online posting of all curricula.

What changed?

Like some of you in this room today, I believed that these problems in public education were sensationalized and as a rule, not true. Maybe it was happening in California, or in New York, but not in Ohio. And certainly not in my little Appalachian county where 73% of the 2020 presidential vote went to the conservative candidate.

In my capacity as a local school board member, I was accumulating more and more evidence suggesting I was wrong. As one example, whistle blowers provided information revealing that in some of our high school classrooms, as many as 25% of our students are participating in some form of social gender transition. I recently read a study that estimates that 1.4% of youth between 13 and 17 identify as transgender. The more evidence I examined, the more it became clear that certain educators were exerting considerable influence over the captive audiences they held in their classrooms.

Most of my exposure to the indoctrination occurring in our school district became apparent to me because my son attended there.

****(I will share those details in my spoken testimony.)****

After receiving numerous complaints that teachers were indoctrinating students about medical issues, I made it clear that it was not appropriate for teachers to discuss their private medical information with students. This was met with a strong reaction from teachers who attempted to have me removed from my elected position.

This was also around the time that our administration - within their rights - removed some books from classrooms. The board policy had not been followed for adding the content, but that didn't stop teachers from protesting.

Eventually, a teacher contacted me privately to inform me that her colleagues were purposefully mistreating my son as a form of retaliation against me. At this point, I withdrew my son from school, and began to provide home education.

In 3rd, 4th and 5th grade, I was aware of numerous instances of indoctrination occurring for my son. Individually, each situation may not be that big of a deal. I am sure there was much more of which I was not aware. The big picture was concerning to me. It wasn't one teacher doing all of this. It was many teachers, each doing a little of it.

Before my son knew, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness..." Before he was taught anything about his citizenship as an American, anything about the true principles and history of our country, the bedrock of his education in civics was laid as follows:

- The discovery of his country was shameful.
- The Founding Fathers of his country were shameful.
- He should fear professional, helpful encounters with law enforcement.
- His parents can't be trusted to make medical decisions for him.

Never mind that he didn't pass the 3rd grade reading guarantee after three years of reading recovery services. Never mind that he wasn't proficient in math. Never mind that school funding is by far the largest portion of our property tax bill. Never mind any expectation that our government schools

should be in the business of academics. All roads pointed toward a very bitter pill for me to swallow. The things done with passion by these educators involved their attempts to raise up little social justice warriors. As a parent, and as a school board member, I did not see that same passion for academic instruction.

These are desperate times for America, and it is imperative to our continued status as a free nation that we stop the spread of these harmful ideologies in our public schools. The alternative is dire. Those who maintain this chokehold on public education will either release their grasp, or the death of public education will be on their hands. There will be more and more like me who will not only leave, but who will also show the way of escape to others.

Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free. ~Ronald Reagan