

Testimony for HB 171
Submitted by: Zeyd Khan
Testifying as Proponent

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

My name is Zeyd Khan, I live in Cleveland, and I am a child psychiatrist. I am a parent and an associate professor, and I am asking this committee to support HB 171 which updates the Social Studies model curriculum to better reflect the histories of all Ohioans by including the migration histories, societal contributions and experiences of a range of communities in Ohio and the United States who are not currently represented in our classrooms.

I believe that passing this bill is good for Ohio and Ohio students because of my own experiences growing up in Springfield, Ohio. My family is from Pakistan and for large portions of my youth, my friends and classmates had no frame of reference of anything to do with where I was from. My family's history, that of my parents, my aunts and uncles, and my grandparents—all Ohioans—was erased, and my story was erased too. Because no one knew where I was from, I had to mispronounce my birth country—Americanize it, much like how I Americanized my own name as a means to better fit in and assimilate. And though this was successful, I put my energy into this rather than learning my family's language, or learning their culture and their history in this country. Our history. When all my ancestors' experiences are erased from my education, their stories no longer seem to hold any value.

In my 30s now, with a daughter of my own, I regret not knowing more of my history and wish my 22 total years of education in this state had resulted in me learning more about where I am from and the stories of Pakistani families here. If our histories and experiences are explained from an early age, they can be celebrated and fostered to create a lifelong connection. And as an immigrant to this country, an inclusive curriculum of all Ohioans would have helped me better understand my neighbors and all of their diverse family experiences.

Ohio is a large state with a rich and diverse tapestry of people from all over the world. It is our social imperative to build strong and welcoming communities and this starts in the classroom where our children must learn more about the histories of their neighbors to combat stereotypes and diminutive versions heard in the media. Please vote yes to HB 171 so we can strengthen our state and community at large with an inclusive and comprehensive social studies education.

Thank you for your time.

Zeyd Khan