

Testimony for HB 171
Submitted by: Michael A. Knight
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 Michael Knight, I live in Cheviot, Ohio, and I am concerned citizen, 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 it better equips history teachers to contextualize the history of our United States.

I've always loved history: it is more than a record of what has happened and by whom. Rather, it provides a crucial understanding of why things are the way they are. Our mistakes and triumphs across the years are all being told as a common story.

This understanding, this context, I believe, is incredibly important for every other societal underpinning.

Thus, I think it is a disservice to leave any community out of our common story. An updated model would enfranchise our friends, family, and community so that they can find their part in our common history.

My folks are Italian. We're the fifth largest ethnic group in the United States. Growing up, the only thing I heard about Italian-Americans in the history books was in the chapters about prohibition. Specifically, about the rise of the mafia. That's the only footnote we got: a loose association with organized crime.

That illusion began to break with Amerigo Vespucci. The cartographer who mapped the Americas during his voyages. His maps proved so popular, that his name is where we derive the word America from. From that leaping point, I learned of labor organizers, politicians, academics, and inventors who were Italian. I learned of migrant workers who built 1920's America for a chance to escape poverty. I learned that Italian-Americans were detained, forced out of their homes, and interned as part of Alien and Sedition act during World War 2.

It's perhaps too strong to say that I felt robbed of learning about what my folks have been through since they immigrated. But I certainly felt like I had been taught the barest of bones. So much more laid underneath the surface, and the school system never gave us a chance to see it.

If given the option, I would have loved to have been able to learn about the portion of history that affected my family the most. I believe my fellow citizens deserve the same. They deserve to learn about their part of history, too.

H.B. 171 does that. It gives teachers the tools they need to teach the other parts of history. It doesn't force anyone to teach anything, but it does provide the option through the current curriculum review process. I see no downside.

Respectfully, I urge the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee to consider my testimony and to vote yes in support of H.B. 171. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation.