

Proponent Testimony for HB 171
House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
Tuesday, Dec 12, 2023
Felix Prewitt

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

My name is Felix Prewitt, I live in Grove City, Ohio, and I am a 16 year old high school student. 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. On the rare occasion that I have learned of these diverse histories, my understanding of our history has been much greater and given far better context.

As an Ohio student, I've felt the impacts of noninclusive curricula personally. As a young child, I had a plethora of social difficulties primarily because I felt unable to relate to my peers. This meant I spent several years of my young life unable to make friends or properly develop social-emotional skills. I had regular outbursts, both in the classroom and at home. I developed a severe anxiety disorder by the age of 9. This caused significant distress to my parents and teachers that could have been prevented if I knew how to relate to people different from myself. While this was not entirely to blame on our curriculum, I know that my outcomes would have been better had I been given a more inclusive education. I am far from the only student who has been failed by the current curriculum in our schools. Even after I received intervention and developed many of the skills I lacked, I have noticed a disturbing trend within my current high school, Central Crossing in the Southwestern City School District. Many students openly speak vitriol against our most vulnerable minority communities, including other youth. It has caused many students to feel unsafe in the school environment.

Passing this bill is greatly beneficial to Ohio and Ohio students as it has been proven time and time again that an inclusive social studies education significantly heightens students' social studies comprehension as well as overall literacy. Updating our curriculum allows student achievement to greatly increase, and in addition provides teachers with the resources they need to serve a broader range of students. Students are more engaged if they are able to see their communities reflected in instruction and relate what they are learning to their own lives. Higher student engagement is the key to higher academic achievement and lower rates of student behavioral issues. A 2018 study from the School Psychology Review that tested inclusive social studies curricula found that, with this curriculum, students were more engaged and less likely to show challenging behaviors; teachers reported they were more equipped to properly handle challenging student behaviors.

We fail our children when we don't provide them the skills needed to effectively engage with our world. I respectfully urge the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee to consider my testimony and to vote yes in support of H.B. 171. It has the support of the majority of youth

and educators. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation.

Works Cited

Piazza, Susan V., et al. “Converging recommendations for culturally responsive literacy practices: Students with learning disabilities, English language learners, and socioculturally diverse learners.” *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2015, pp. 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.18251/ijme.v17i3.1023>.

Larson, Kristine E., et al. “Examining how proactive management and culturally responsive teaching relate to student behavior: Implications for measurement and practice.” *School Psychology Review*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2018, pp. 153–166, <https://doi.org/10.17105/spr-2017-0070.v47-2>.