



Proponent Testimony of: Anisa Liban  
House Bill 171  
December 11, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Bird, Vice Chair Arthur and members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee. My name is Anisa Liban and I serve as the Government Affairs Director at the Council on American Islamic Relations, CAIR-Ohio. I urge the committee to support House Bill 171, which has wide support by a diverse coalition of organizations, one that is a true reflection of Ohio's growing community.

Ohio has a unique and rich history that was made possible by various communities of immigrants and Indigenous people who propelled Ohio's economic growth. Ohio achieved statehood in 1803, becoming the first state to be formed entirely from the public domain—so it was socially diverse from the outset. Today, Ohio is home to various legacy and ethnic communities, including the second largest Somali American community in the United States.

As the nation's largest Muslim Civil Rights organization, we exist to empower Ohio's Muslim community—specifically Muslim students, educators, families, and school administrators who are faced with unique challenges. One of the biggest factors that lead to discriminatory behavior experienced by students is misinformation, miseducation, and bias surrounding Islam and a student's heritage. This is why passing HB 171 is critical to ensuring Ohio's students, who will undoubtedly shape the state's future, are equipped with the resources and knowledge they need to advance in the classroom and beyond.

The bill aims to improve the K-12 social studies curriculum by increasing topics that give educators the opportunity to expand their students' worldviews and learn about the history of various groups, including Indigenous, Asian, Arab, and African communities that has historically shaped Ohio. It is important that students engage with a social studies curriculum that includes their lived experiences. We must seize the opportunity to update Ohio's K-12 social studies curriculum which in the long-term will help combat Islamophobia, antisemitism, and other forms of hate.

A 2018 study conducted by National Association of School Psychologists found, "a statistically significant association between observations of culturally responsive teaching and proactive behavior management practices." Updating the social studies requirements means more students will see themselves in the curriculum. Students of all backgrounds deserve to feel like they belong in their classrooms, schools, and communities and educators deserve to be equipped with classroom materials that can support high-quality learning.

We urge you to support HB 171; let Ohio students, educators, families, and faculty know you value a comprehensive, culturally responsive updated social studies curriculum. Thank you for your time and consideration.