

Testimony for HB 171
Submitted by: Thomas Jensen
MAZU
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 Thomas Jensen, I live in Yellow Springs, and I am a small business owner who co-owns MAZU, a global street dining restaurant, located in Yellow Springs, OH. I am a graduate of the Ohio public education system and a 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 social studies curriculum in Ohio should reflect the rich diversity of our state. Growing up as a person of Indian descent in Ohio attending public middle school and high school I was not exposed to the rich multicultural history of African American communities, Asian American and Pacific Islander communities, Arab, African, and North African immigrant, refugee, and asylee communities, Appalachian communities, Jewish communities, Latin American communities or Native American communities throughout my public education experience. Understanding the historical and current day contributions of these communities will ensure that all students in Ohio gain a fuller picture of what it means to be an Ohioan.

An updated model curriculum would **provide rich, engaging options for teaching and learning social studies** in Ohio. It will equip teachers with activities and lessons that can support and develop respect for the students in our classrooms who come from different backgrounds than our own. Students are also more engaged when they see their communities reflected in the classroom. It's important that our students **can connect to the information** that they're learning in school.

A 2020 study from the National Education Association shows us that students of color, in particular, who participated in courses that reflected different identities, cultures, and backgrounds had a greater sense of belonging and sense of self.

H.B. 171 **takes advantage of the existing curriculum review process**, providing options and enriching the guidance used by our education experts to continue developing the best curriculum for Ohio's students.

We fail our kids when we don't provide them with an education that truly **mirrors Ohio's current makeup as a state**. H.B. 171 can solve for that by educating students about the experiences, migration, and contributions of a range of communities that already, and in many cases, have long called Ohio home. H.B. 171 has the backing and support of the **vast majority of Ohio teachers**, with endorsements from Ohio Education Association, Ohio Federation of Teachers, and Ohio Council of the Social Studies.

I respectfully 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.

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