

Chair Bird, Vice-Chair Fowler, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Ryan Welt. I am a high school social studies teacher at Franklin High School. I am in favor of HB 171.

American history is a rich, interesting tapestry of people and events. Any number of which could serve as the focus of entire courses. I understand that priorities must be set in teaching young people so that they can come to appreciate a broad understanding of our past and culture to inform their future study and indeed their development as individuals. HB 171 provides students with an opportunity to find role models that they share commonality with in experience, language, culture, religion, and more. This bill places the student as the top priority in the social studies classroom. Students will have the opportunity to study a broader range of topics and individuals, opening them to historical figures and topics that they may not have crossed paths with otherwise.

This bill serves to create a learning community among Ohio students to help them understand the experiences of others around them. Students regardless of their background, urban or rural, immigrant, or native Ohioan, will have the opportunity to see themselves as belonging in our state. HB 171 will help to create a more unified Ohio. Continuing to leave people out of our social studies instruction divides our state as individuals do not understand the experiences and perspectives of their neighbors and classmates. Teaching in these politically polarized times is challenging. Standards that strive to create community will help Ohio students to be prepared to understand multiple viewpoints, welcome new information, and develop as connected citizens.

Governor Mike DeWine has prioritized student mental health in our schools. These standards help to create a sense of belonging for students in Ohio. Without this understanding of their history within our state, students may feel lost in their communities and unwelcome among their peers. HB 171 promotes a greater understanding of self for students and supports the teaching of Ohio's SEL standards, particularly SEL standards C1, C2, C3, D3 1.d, E3 3.d, and E4 1.d. High quality teaching instruction is reinforced across curricula and integrating this learning into social studies teaching will help students understand application of SEL lessons in their classroom, community, and state. HB 171 serves this goal.

I ask you to consider my testimony and support this bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Ryan Welt