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Ohio House of Representatives

HB 486 Opponent Written Testimony

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Retired Educator

Chair Fowler Arthur, Vice Chair Odioso, Ranking Member Brennan, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on House Bill 486. I am a retired Ohio educator with 50 years' experience. This includes teaching high school social studies in Columbus City Schools and serving as its social studies curriculum. I later served as a social studies specialist with the Ohio Department of Education.

During my tenure with the Ohio Department of Education, I was involved in the development of Ohio's State Tests for Social Studies and the development and revision of Ohio's Learning Standards and Model Curriculum for Social Studies.

My experience leads me to oppose HB486 and concur with the arguments outlined in the Ohio Council for Social Studies' (OCSS) position statement to this committee on this bill.

As the OCSS points out, there is redundancy in this bill. Religion is already embedded in the social studies standards and model curriculum for elementary, middle, and high school. The American story cannot be adequately taught without including the impact of religion on American history. The social studies standards and model curriculum allow for teachers to elaborate on the topics they are covering in their classrooms. Local school districts can add additional focus in their curricula.

Also, HB 486 undermines Ohio's curriculum development process. The current social studies standards were approved in 2018. The revision process began two years before with a posting of the 2010 standards for public input. An advisory committee of representatives from statewide education associations and social studies education groups reviewed the public comments and advised the Department on which standards to update. Working groups of educators with social studies expertise reviewed the recommendations and made revisions to a draft of the standards.

The Department posted the draft revised standards for public review in summer 2017. The working groups reviewed those comments and incorporated suggestions into the draft standards. The State Board of Education adopted the revised standards in February 2018. H.B. 486 does not provide this vetting process.

Finally, listing topics in legislation with a particular focus for teachers to teach opens a Pandora's box for other groups that may want topics related to their interests to be taught as well. We should not go down that path.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to provide this written testimony.