

Senate Finance Committee

Interested Party Testimony on House Sub-Bill 96

06/04/2025

To Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson and the Honorable Members of the Ohio Senate Finance Committee,

I am Dr. Tanisha Pruitt, State Policy Lead for the Upper Midwest at iCivics. As a national, non-partisan civic education organization, iCivics is dedicated to making civic education a priority for the health and strength of our nation. We were founded in 2009 by the late Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor with a vision to advance civic learning by providing educators and students with the knowledge, skills, and resources needed to embrace and engage in our civic life together.

Governor DeWine's biennial budget proposal includes \$1 million in FY 2026 and \$500,000 in FY 2027 for an integrated social studies, English language arts, and civics curriculum (EDUCD73 Academic Standards, Section: 265.70), as well as \$500,000 for professional development to support educators in adopting this integrated curriculum. The House has supported this proposal, reducing the appropriation to \$500,000 in each fiscal year.

As a representative for iCivics and our 390 CivixNow coalition partners I want to express our strong support for the continued inclusion of these appropriations in the budget. Incorporating an integrated curriculum will enhance civic knowledge and engagement among students statewide. iCivics has partnered with the Ohio History Connection to display civic education and iCivics resources at the statehouse museum. This display highlights Civic education as essential for ensuring that individuals are equipped to participate effectively in our self-governing society. It empowers young people to understand the past, engage in the present, and shape the future. We encourage all of you to take a visit down to the museum for further information on iCivics and the importance of civic education for Ohio.

As an advocate, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of civic education. However, these areas often receive insufficient emphasis in our educational system. The Council of Chief State School Officers estimates that 44% of school districts have reduced instructional time for social studies over the past two decades. Moreover, only 22% of American 8th graders scored proficient or above in the 2022 National Assessment of Educational Progress in Civics, indicating a significant gap in civic understanding.

Civic education fosters political awareness and faith in our country. Today too many young people have lost faith in our country. The best way we know to strengthen our democracy is to teach it. Teaching young people the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they need to effectively share their ideas and contribute to their communities is the best way to get them to believe in the future of the country.

Since 2021, 26 states have adopted 42 policies to strengthen K-12 civic education. This legislative session, 45 states are considering 193 bills impacting K-12 civic education. Ohio has

an opportunity to join this national initiative by supporting the integrated curriculum and professional development appropriations in the budget.

Thank you for considering my testimony on behalf of iCivics and the Civics Now Coalition.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tanisha Pruitt, Ph.D.
State Policy Lead, Upper Midwest
iCivics, tanisha.pruitt@icivics.org