

Testimony on House Bill 62

House State and Local Government Committee

June 9, 2021

Submitted by:

Kristine Woodworth

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to present this testimony in opposition to House Bill 62.

My name is Kristine Woodworth. I am a retired small business owner, married to a current small business owner. I am a resident of Cincinnati (State House District 27), and mother of two grown sons. I am not an Ohio native - I moved here after college for a professional job and a graduate degree, planning to stay two years before heading back west to my home state. That was in 1979. One thing led to another; I found that Cincinnati was a wonderful place to work, live and raise a family, and so here I am, by choice, 42 years later.

You will hear the facts about this bill from many others today. You will hear about how House Bill 62 is based on the same failed theory used by southern states to fight desegregation and the dismantling of Jim Crow laws. You will hear how The Supreme Court has already ruled nullification laws unconstitutional, and that no matter whether you like it or not, in our system of government you in the state legislatures are not the “deciders” about which laws are constitutional. You’ll hear about how even though intentionally introducing unconstitutional legislation might seem like harmless performative lawmaking, passing this bill will do real damage to our state. It will cost our state dearly in dollars to defend this bill in an inevitably losing lawsuit. It will cost us in terms of public safety by undermining law enforcement and the rule of law. And it will cost us in reputation around the country, with businesses and young people we might hope to attract by showing that Ohio is a desirable place to live and work.

I’m just going to focus on that last point, on the very personal impact that extremist state laws like this have on me and my family. Since I began paying attention to what was happening in the Statehouse, belatedly, about a decade ago, I have seen very little that would make a person want to move to Ohio. The General Assembly has grown increasingly extreme and increasingly detached from the true needs of Ohioans. Many of our putative representatives listen only to the loudest or most threatening voices, while the opinions and needs of the majority of our residents go unaddressed. Many bills introduced and passed are clearly “solutions” in search of a problem. This failure to represent the people has an insidious and cumulative effect.

In my family, out of my sons and their four cousins, all born and raised in Ohio, all college educated, only one remains in the state. The rest of these young people reaching the prime of their careers, on

the cusp of raising families, have moved - to Seattle, Virginia, D.C. and even Europe. They are unlikely to ever return to Ohio, and every time Ohio makes the national (or international) news for silly stunts like HB62, they are less likely. For me personally, I am now retired, and fortunate enough to have options as well. It seems increasingly unlikely that I will spend my retirement years and dollars in Ohio.

Perhaps the diaspora of the Woodworth family from Ohio is fine with the General Assembly - no great loss you might say. But multiply this times thousands, hundreds of thousands. Think about the effect of driving the most educated population out of Ohio without being able to attract new businesses and young talent. In 2022 we will lose a Congressional seat - I expect those losses will continue.

Your job is to create an environment that protects the safety and well-being of citizens of Ohio and creates a vibrant economy with good jobs. Passing unconstitutional bills just to cater to the most extreme minority of voices does nothing to advance these goals.

Please think about the long term consequences of passing bills like House Bill 62, and vote NO.