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House Bill 327 – Sponsor Testimony

June 15, 2021

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the Ohio House State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present our sponsor testimony on House Bill 327, legislation promoting education, not indoctrination. I am joined today by my joint-sponsor, Representative Sarah Fowler Arthur.

Racism is always wrong.

Our legislation seeks to correct a growing, concerning, educational curriculum that has found its way in our state's schools and workplace training. This curriculum does not challenge students to think critically, or inspire them to embrace their individualism in our society. Rather, it attempts to imbue them with the notion that they are either oppressed or the oppressor. That, based off the color of your skin, nationality, or ethnicity, you have a predisposition to behave or think a certain way. As the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., a man who championed equality for all humans, stated: "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, hate cannot drive out hate..."

Prohibited divisive concepts are clearly defined within the bill as training or requiring some to believe that they are better or worse than another person based solely upon the external characteristics of "nationality, race, color, ethnicity, religion, or sex," similarly described in the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Teaching our children that they are either victims or victimizers does not inspire change or love, but rather is divisive and creates a conundrum in their minds. America, since its inception, has stood firm on the grounds of individual excellence. In our bill, we promote respect for all.

Each person, alone, holds the keys to his or her destiny and must create a personal legacy in this sometimes unforgiving world. Compelling our children to believe that they are prone to succeed based on qualities they cannot change, such as their skin color or ethnicity, removes all sense of individual responsibility. Why should a child try and aspire to be their best self when they are told that they will definitively act a particular way? This educational curriculum breeds complacency and self-hate, and threatens core American values that our nation champions.

The purpose of this bill is to provide equal and non-discriminatory education opportunities to students, while preventing further division among Americans. House Bill 327 specifically encourages the

objective instruction and impartial discussion about divisive concepts while prohibiting the promotion, indoctrination, or forced acceptance of the concepts contained therein. We do not believe in:

Assigning fault, blame, or bias to individuals because of their race, color, nationality, or sex.

Claiming that, consciously or unconsciously, and by virtue of his or her race, color, nationality, or sex, members of any race are inherently racist or are inherently inclined to oppress others, or that members of a sex are inherently sexist or inclined to oppress others;

Engaging in any conduct or educational activity that promotes or teaches the concept that one race or sex is inherently superior or inferior to another race or sex;  
Requiring teachings or training in these topics as a prerequisite for or to retain employment or compelling educational belief in these topics.

This bill does NOT prevent schools or government entities from teaching about racism, slavery, and segregation. What it does prohibit is schools from indoctrinating students by claiming one race is superior to another, or that individuals should be treated differently on the basis of race. HB 327 encourages the objective instruction about and discussion of divisive concepts, rather than allowing taxpayer dollars to be spent on concepts that indoctrinate and divide, rather than unite, students.

I urge you to listen to these tenets and think of how harmful and detrimental it is to compel our impressionable children to believe such things. Is this the vision that champions of the Civil Rights Movement and all those who have worked on bridging our divides as humans through cooperation, love, and understanding would have hoped for?

Our bill is not a response, but rather an affirmation, that no matter the color of your skin, the ethnicity your ancestral family calls home, your gender, you are an individual. Racism and sexism are simply unacceptable. We, as individuals, must ensure that our schools educate on the issues of injustice and intolerance, not use those issues to create injustice and intolerance.

Our bill does not prohibit the teachings of injustice throughout our country and the world, oppression, historical documents, or the discussion of controversial topics in the classroom. House Bill 327 will ensure that our students are being taught to think, not what to think. The goal is to educate students to think critically and not be compelled to believe ideology that hopelessly constrains them within the limits of oppressed or oppressor.

This is a significant statewide issue, and we have heard from our colleagues as well, and that is the reason we have thirty-five co-sponsors supporting the bill. I thank each one of them for their support.

I urge your support of House Bill 327, the Dignity and Non-Discrimination in Education Act. I thank the committee for hearing my testimony. Representative Fowler Arthur will now give her sponsor testimony. Upon conclusion of our testimony, we will answer any questions you may have.