

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 322 and House Bill 327

House State and Local Government Committee

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Chairman Wiggam, Vice chair John, Ranking member Kelly and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on behalf of the Center for Christian Virtue, an Ohio nonprofit dedicated to advancing public policy that seeks good for our citizens, and the Institute for Principled Policy, an Ohio-based public policy think-tank, in support of House Bills 322 and 327, both of which are designed to ensure that educational entities remain non-biased in the course of teaching history, civics or similar subjects.

The two pieces of legislation before you address what are termed “divisive concepts”, things which seek to drive a wedge between people, that work to create animosities based on immutable characteristics. Those concepts, when advanced through our schools or by governments, constitute a form of bullying. These are also things that are used to tear down many positive steps that have been made in our culture since the successful Civil Rights movement.

Let me leave no doubt: There have indeed been failures in how our country’s history has been taught, omissions that have kept many from having a well-rounded education and understanding of the viewpoints of many diverse segments of our society.

Let me also be just as clear: the push to teach such divisive concepts as those outlined in the legislation does not fix the problem but instead creates an environment where learning and the pursuit of truth is forfeit.

The Assembly has taken many strides toward ensuring that students in our schools are provided an environment where learning can take place: from providing school lunches, technology and transportation, to giving tools to schools to address bullying and intimidation of students. The teaching of such divisive concepts can change that classroom environment in ways that will work counter to the efforts we have already put in place to counteract bullying.

The provisions of the legislation work to ensure that such adverse effects do not happen, that the classroom is a place where even-handed presentations of topics is encouraged, and where all students should feel safe to discuss topics. It is dangerous that such topics be front-end loaded with accusations and allegations of the motives and beliefs of any group over against another, and the legislation before you today is seeking to make sure that this type of straw-man creating doesn’t occur.

We hope that this committee will forward a balanced and well-thought-out policy in relation to this matter, either with House Bill 322, House Bill 327, or an amalgam of the two. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.