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*Advocating for Life, Faith, and Freedom in the Public Square*

To: Members of the State and Local Government Committee  
From: Chris Long, President Ohio Christian Alliance  
Re: Proponent testimony H.B. 327 Prohibiting teaching, advocating, or promoting divisive concepts

I would like to thank Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairman John, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the State and Local Government Committee for receiving our testimony today in support of H.B. 327 that prohibits the teaching, advocating or promoting of divisive concepts.

Peter Kirsanow, Commissioner with the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, has stated that critical race theory is destructive in the classroom and in the board room across America. Title VII clearly prohibits discrimination based on race. Last July, during the COVID-19 shutdown, the Ohio State Board of Education rushed through a resolution to support Critical Race Theory in the Ohio classroom. Five members of the board voted against the resolution. One of the members voting no was State School Board member John Hagan of the 8th District. He states the resolution was rushed through and that parents of school children are rising up to challenge this new destructive trend in the Ohio classroom. Most Ohioans were unaware of the resolution passed by the State Board of Education last year. However, now that Ohio school children are back in the classroom, they are being confronted with this divisive teaching concept that negatively injects race into the classroom.

For a generation, we have learned to appreciate the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. when he stated, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." But in many of today's classroom, these words are no longer being taught. Instead, these words have been replaced with the very divisive critical race theory. Our office has received reports from around the state that this indeed is the case. Some parents and students are actually afraid to come forward for fear of reprisal or of becoming a victim of the cancel culture for speaking out against critical race theory.

H.B. 327 addresses the great concern that is before us. H.B. 327 speaks directly to the issue by going to the heart of the problem when it states what "divisive concepts" means on page 1 line 11:

(1) "Divisive concepts" means the concepts that: (a) One nationality, color, ethnicity, race, or sex is inherently superior to another nationality, color, ethnicity, race, or sex (b) The United States is fundamentally racist or sexist. (c) An individual, by virtue of the individual's nationality, color, ethnicity, race, or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously. (d) An individual should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment solely or partly because of the individual's nationality, color, ethnicity, race, or sex.

The bill goes on to address the school districts directly on page 3 lines 54-61:

No school district shall teach, instruct, or train any divisive concepts, nor shall any school district require a student to advocate for or against a specific topic or point of view to receive credit for any coursework. (2)  
No school district shall accept private funding for the purpose of developing a curriculum, purchasing or selecting course materials, or providing teacher training or professional development for a course promoting divisive concepts.

Because this issue is so serious, the bill also includes financial penalties for those schools or school districts that ignore or violate the provisions in this bill that are designed to treat all students equally on page 3 lines 62-68:

If the superintendent of public instruction determines that any school district knowingly violates the prohibitions prescribed in division (B) of this section, the department of education shall withhold state funding from the district in the amount determined by the department until such time as the department determines the district no longer is in violation of that division.

At a time when our citizens have gone through great stress from social and economic upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns over the past year, one place where we can work to come together is in the classroom. However, critical race theory is destructive and divisive. Every night on the news, there are parents debating with local school districts over the critical race theory issue in a number of states.

We applaud the sponsors and cosponsors of H.B. 327 for taking a proactive step to get ahead of this problem. Ohio students need to return to a sense of normal at this time. Their lives have already been disrupted with cancellation of sporting events, proms, and graduations. What our children need is a safe, secure environment for learning. That should be the goal of every school district at this time. H.B. 327 sends that strong message. This legislation presents an opportunity for this committee and the Ohio General Assembly to make that affirming statement.

Thank you, Chairman Wiggam, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, for receiving our testimony in support of H.B. 327.