

**Testimony on Ohio H.B. No. 322**

**By**

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**Before the State and Local Government Committee**

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Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, I am honored to provide testimony on H.B. No. 322. I am Director of Research at the National Association of Scholars and Project Director of the Civics Alliance. I have a doctorate in History from Rutgers University and have taught at Rutgers University and Concordia University. For the past five years, I have written about education policy for the National Association of Scholars, and for many other journals of policy and opinion. I wrote *Making Citizens: How American Universities Teach Civics* (2017), which to my knowledge was the first critical book-length study of action civics, and which significantly informed the model Partisanship Out of Civics Act, published and endorsed by the National Association of Scholars. This model legislation helped inspire H.B. 322.

Mr. Chairman, the National Association of Scholars believes that instruction in Critical Race Theory and “action civics” is harmful at any educational level. Critical Race Theory is one of a family of ideologies historically derived from and substantially influenced by Marxist analysis, which require a transformation of our schools from places that teach students to seek out truth to places that teach students to seek out power so as to revolutionize America. Critical Race Theory requires students in every area of intellectual inquiry to assume that America is made up of oppressed and oppressing identity groups and that the duty of intellectual study is to work to “liberate” America from this putative oppression. “Action civics” is the favorite pedagogy of adherents of Critical Race Theory, because they can use public taxpayer dollars and school hours both to enlist students in “liberating” protest and to teach them the tactics of how to organize other Americans in such protests. Critical Race Theory and “action civics” together educate students to be community organizers committed to the belief that the main purpose of education is to liberate America from “systemic oppression.” The NAS believes that this improperly politicizes our education system.

The National Association of Scholars opposes Critical Race Theory and “action civics” at any level of education. We have convened the Civics Alliance, a national coalition dedicated to opposing the adoption of this linked doctrine and pedagogy either in K-12 schools or in colleges. The Civics Alliance especially support the model Partisanship Out of Civics Act, which is hosted on the National Association of Scholars’ website. The Civics Alliance supports all efforts by policymakers to remove Critical Race Theory and “action civics,” including declarations by governors and state attorney generals, rulemaking by boards of education, and state laws that draw upon our Model Partisanship Out of Civics Act, such as H.B. 322. Of these methods, we think that state laws are the surest way to achieve this goal. We enthusiastically endorse H.B.

322 as a necessary means to remove Critical Race Theory and “action civics”—and a means which has been carefully tailored to champion the fullest liberty to engage in free discussion of the nature of American government and history.

While the National Association of Scholars opposes Critical Race Theory and “action civics” at any level of education, our core mission focuses on undergraduate education and includes work to ensure that students who enter colleges and universities are prepared for college-level study in virtuous citizenship, which for citizens of the United States entails an understanding of the nature of democratic institutions, including representative government. We support H.B. 322 in the first instance because K-12 instruction in “action civics,” also known as “protest civics,” “project-based civics,” and “civic engagement,” is the worst possible preparation for college-level study in civics, political science, or history. Students lose precious classroom hours when they should be learning the foundation of factual knowledge that prepares them for college-level study. Worse, “action civics” alters students’ attitudes to learning in ways that severely inhibit collegiate instruction. Students should come to college prepared to engage in individual, disengaged inquiry into the truth. “Action civics” not only fails to prepare students for individual, disengaged inquiry but also teaches them that they positively should not engage in this mode of learning. K-12 instruction in “action civics” almost guarantees that high school graduates will not be prepared for college-level study in civics, political science, or history.

I have had a chance to read a draft of Stanley Kurtz’s testimony submitted to this committee in support of H.B. 322. I also endorse his testimony in its entirety.

Mr. Chairman, H.B. 322 is a necessary bill and a good bill. It rebuffs the pressing danger that Critical Race Theory and “action civics” pose to Ohio K-12 education and does so in well-tailored fashion that minimizes legislative intrusion in educators’ professional autonomy. It balances the right of Ohio citizens and legislators to ensure that their children receive a proper education with the proper delegation of educational responsibilities to teachers and education administrators. H.B. 322 is a good, moderate bill that will improve Ohio’s education laws. The National Association of Scholars and the Civics Alliance enthusiastically endorse it.