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Member Ohio State Board of Education 2017-2020
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PROPONENT TESTIMONY OF LISA WOODS, MEDINA, OHIO ON SUB H.B. 327
(GRENDALL) AND H.B. 322 (JONES) BEFORE THE HOUSE STATE AND LOCAL
GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE

Good morning Mr. Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the Committee. My name is Lisa Woods. I am the mother of 5 children including a special needs child and 2 children serving on active duty in the United States Armed Forces. I am a resident of York Township, Ohio and have a strong background in education from a parents' perspective, and am trying to make sure that my children have enough tools to succeed in the rapidly changing world around them. In addition, I served as an elected Member of the Ohio State Board of Education, an amazing experience and one that allowed me to help make policy for the school children of Ohio, including my own.

I come before you to testify as a proponent of both Sub H.B. 327 and H.B. 322 which are unfortunately needed to foster a positive educational environment in Ohio and to address actions taken by the State Board last year which launched an initiative in school districts across Ohio to stop teaching students valuable tools for their future, and start spending time, treasure, and talent misleading Ohio school children on disproven and factually inaccurate theories, pitting Ohioan vs. Ohioan, taking up valuable classroom time and missing the main point of our education system which is critical thinking and specific knowledge to succeed as citizens.

I ran for public office in 2016 and 2020 to make a difference in the lives of my children and the other children of Ohio. I know that you did as well. You proudly serve in this body and make important decisions for today and our future. None are more critical and more important than providing young people with hope and the tools to bring that hope to fruition.

What is good for my children is clearly good for all the school children of Ohio. We need to teach them truths, to teach them proven concepts and to utilize practical learning measurements to insure that they achieve the required academic levels necessary to earn their high school diploma. These steps will allow them to secure better employment opportunities, pursue a higher education and ultimately result in their enjoying a successful career. Ultimately that is what K-12 education is all about.

Before I delve into the vital need of Sub. H.B. 327 and H.B. 322, let me add some perspective. I believe the late Dr. Martin Luther King succinctly summed up the high purpose of public education in his 1948 address to Morehouse College entitled "The Purpose of Education." I quote him:

“Education must also train one for quick, resolute and effective thinking. To think incisively and to think for one’s self is very difficult. We are prone to let our mental life become invaded by legions of half-truths, prejudices, and propaganda. At this point, I often wonder whether or not education is fulfilling its purpose. A great majority of the so-called educated people do not think logically and scientifically. Even the press, the classroom, the platform, and the pulpit in many instances do not give us objective and unbiased truths. To save man from the morass of propaganda, in my opinion, is one of the chief aims of education. Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction.

The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals.”

These two pieces of legislation will assure that Dr. King’s definition of education is in part promulgated through Ohio public schools. Last July, a resolution was passed by the Ohio Board of Education in haste and frankly with almost no public input nor consultation. Resolution 20 was wide reaching and has set local Boards of Education into spending considerable time and effort to do exactly what Dr. King preached against: promoting biased, non-objective and unproven theories about history and race relations that are the subject of my testimony today.

Five Members of the Board stood against this resolution and the Resolution set off a fire storm of controversy that continues to this day, necessitating the need for thoughtful and reasoned legislation to put a stop to the barrage of mistruths, disproven theories and outright mistruths to be thrust upon our Ohio school children.

Time and again, Ohio’s system of higher education and our employer community has brought to your attention the fact that Ohio school children are not prepared for their future upon graduation. Employers have repeatedly stated that our graduates lack the job skills that they need to work in Ohio’s entry level and professional positions. Employers and their representatives come to this body, to this committee and make this claim over and over again. Meanwhile, lobbyists and politicians in Washington are advocating that we allow more foreign workers to immigrate to our country to fill technical jobs through the H1B Visa program. What all this is telling us quite clearly is that the current school curriculum is not getting the job done and if our state education system should be prioritizing anything, it should be a curriculum focusing on the basics that would lead to better jobs and careers.

We have a school report card system that has been broken for a decade. Ohio’s Common Core curriculum, no matter by what euphemism they choose to call it, is weak and not properly preparing children for their future. What critics are calling a “lost school year” with very limited classroom learning is coming to a conclusion and professionals of all stripes fret that our school children may have been set back years because of it. Amidst all this, the priorities of the State Board and of hundreds of local school districts have become skewed to ignore these elephants in the room, and have begun to confuse

our school children even more by propagating false accusations about people based on their skin color and a warped and false version of the foundation and history of our country which flies in the face of hundreds of years of known truths.

Why is this legislation needed?

The very definition of truth is worth getting on the record: From Webster's Definition of truth 1a (1): the body of real things, events, and facts: ACTUALITY

Simply put, Ohio's education system must strive for truth and teach truth to our school children. And that brings us to the purpose of H.B. 322 and Sub H.B. 327. The teaching of truth must at all times be a priority of Ohio policy.

Across Ohio and the nation, parents in large numbers are going to School Board meetings and sounding off about the truth. Schools that are following protocols like Ohio Board of Education Resolution 20 are not teaching truths, in fact they are incorporating known mistruths into curricula and miseducating children. This is not the purpose of public education, it is not the role of public education, it is exactly the opposite of the stated purpose of public education and these bills will stop the slide into miseducating a whole generation of children and indoctrinating them into a truly un-American ideology not based on fact.

If the Buckeye local schools taught that Ohio was actually in Canada, would not the State put a stop to such an obvious lie? Welcome to the 1619 Project, a completely debunked mistruth that is still listed as a suggested teaching aide on the Ohio Department of Education website. I won't go into great detail; you know the truth. 1619 is a failed attempt to claim that the United States of America was actually founded 157 years before our actual foundation and founded strictly as a racist, greedy country focused on the slave trade. Of course, that flies in the face of all known facts. Current curricula correctly chronicle the foundation of the United States, its history as a colony, and examine in great detail the scourge of slavery and the efforts to eradicate it.

Yet, 1619 is being propagated in schools across the state. If ODE is recommending 1619 as a teaching aide, you can bet it is being taught. In this very building where Abraham Lincoln's bust stands, the Great Emancipator, the man who literally gave his life for his country over the issue of civil rights for black Americans, the 1619 Project lies about Lincoln and discredits him and his abolitionist supporters, making spurious claims about the Lincoln Administration all of which are debunked by actual scholarly truth.

What are the consequences of these lies? With 1619 encouraged as a teaching aide, Ohio school children are now subject to clearly inaccurate and radical propaganda. Webster's defines propaganda as "information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view." In this case' 1619 proven to be false by scores of historians is a political cause, not a factual history. If passed, these two important bills will take steps to remove 1619 from Ohio curricula. If private Ohioans want to read 1619 and consider its false claims, so be it, but Ohio's school children should not be subjected to it. School children should know the

truth, and studying the Mayflower Compact, the Federalist Papers, the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution and the Emancipation Proclamation will all provide the context needed about the true foundation of the Republic and the heroic abolitionists like Lincoln who abolished slavery and ended actual systematic racism in 1865 in 13 states. The 11 which rebelled against the fledgling Republic were defeated by Lincoln in a war where a great many Ohioans lost their lives.

Currently there is a myth being propagated that Critical Race Theory, an avowed racist creed that is as destructive and detrimental to Ohioans as any other does not really exist, it is not being thrust upon our school children, and is just “a different way of thinking.” Nothing could be farther from the truth. I have heard these spurious arguments for some time now, and I am here to tell you that Critical Race Theory is being injected into schools through teacher professional development by ODE itself, and I am one of the people who “voluntarily” was indoctrinated, and I use the term voluntarily rather loosely.

Organized racism, which is really what CRT is, starts out subtly. The CRT adherents start out with outrageous lies that become more outrageous as they go along. Systematic racism is one of those outright lies. Let me assert the truth here. In order for Ohio to have committed the crime of systematic racism, a system of racism has to have been set in place either by law, rule, or practice. In all of our history, Ohio has never done this and currently does not do this. No US Supreme Court decision has ever held Ohio law or rule to be part of a system of racism. The same cannot be said for the 13 US states where slavery was legal. But Ohio is not one of those. In our long history since 1803 Ohio has always granted equal rights to people regardless of race. The Northwest Territory explicitly stated that slavery was not legal nor to be tolerated and Ohio was the crown gem of the Underground Railroad and proudly involved in the abolition movement. Ohio's votes elected Lincoln and abolitionist Republicans to office to right the wrongs of the Southern states.

I was forced to watch CRT videos and read CRT grievances while on the Board of Education. To support its false theory they make many demonstrably false claims. These claims are being taught as part of teacher professional development as we speak. One false claim states that the nation's war on drugs is actually racist because black people are arrested and convicted of drug offenses more than white people. This General Assembly wrote those laws, and they apply to everyone. If the laws that you wrote were discriminatory, would they not have been struck down by the Courts? Would you not go back and alter them? The reality is that the war on drugs is an attempt to keep all citizens, regardless of race, safe from the dangers of addiction, literally spreading death into our communities. These laws protect all Ohioans equally. That is just one example, but under CRT they are essentially indicting all of you for a crime you have neither committed nor intended to commit. This is just one example of the type of falsehoods being promulgated by CRT.

Moreover, critical race theory makes assertions that each white person harbors racism. CRT preaches a dystopian cannibalism that we are essentially born into a caste system and that there is no way out of this caste system due to racism. When you ask that they

logically prove that this is the case they offer the flimsiest of arguments none of which stand up to the scrutiny of the most basic of the scientific method. CRT literally says that race is political, not biological. That would be news to every biology teacher in Ohio, since it is patently false. Why do they cast aspersions on every white person with such hideous stereotypes? Proponents of CRT are making outrageous and unprovable claims here, and this is what is supposed to be taught to school children and teacher professional development?

It does get worse, and much worse. CRT divides Ohioans into camps and specifically teaches against a colorblind society. Our entire system is based on treating everyone the same. CRT is at odds with this basic premise. Equal Justice Under the Law, the premise of what you do as Legislators, is openly opposed by these radical theories. Talk about intolerance, it is inherent to CRT.

School districts are force feeding this propaganda in Ohio and across the country. Kids are being told that “whiteness” is wrong. This alleged whiteness includes the nuclear family, Judeo-Christian values, a strong work ethic. Excuse me, but those are exactly the values that have made Americans of all races, creeds, and colors successful. Teaching this miseducation can only make Ohioans less successful, and dramatically so. Most importantly, it is down right disproven and wrong. Districts are contracting with service providers like the “Diversity Center of Cleveland” which is charging taxpayers to ferment this division and angst. Taxpayers are paying for this and schools are taking valuable classroom time to indoctrinate children with these demonstrably false theories.

All of what I have stated here is factual, and that should be the standard in education. Our education system should be singularly focused on improving the careers of Ohio’s young people. Students need more science, more mathematics. Students need to learn real history. Most of our history is glorious, some is not, but to change it to push a false narrative that subverts the very nation in which we reside for propaganda purposes is totally unacceptable and this Legislature must intervene. Please pass this legislation in the name of truth and stand up for what is right before it is too late. Once you destroy a generation of young people by poisoning their minds with falsehoods and outright provable lies it is hard to come back.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer this testimony and thanks to Reps. Grendell and Plummer for sponsoring it in the name of truth.