

Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Alec Avdakov and I am a student at Bowling Green State University and I am an Adolescent to Young Adult Education major with a concentration in Social Studies. I have had a passion for history for the majority of my life and I am here to speak against House Bill 327 and what it would do to the subject I love; history.

House Bill 327 intends to forbid teachers from educating their students from teaching “divisive” issues without being impartial. Let me give a few examples of divisive issues that I could teach now that are wrong. However, with the passage of this bill, I could not teach that these examples are wrong. The trail of tears forced Native Americans off their ancestral lands and caused the deaths of 4,000 people. Was that wrong? I don’t know, I must be impartial. Slavery was an institution that was legal in the Constitution of the United States. It allowed rich white southerners to own human beings that came from Africa. Was that wrong? I don’t know, I must be impartial. Now for the most divisive issue of all time: the Holocaust. Keep in mind that I have a roommate at my apartment who practices the Jewish faith. The Holocaust killed 11 million people including 6 million Jews in the worst tragedy of all time. Surely you cannot ask me to be impartial about this topic. I fear the mighty wrath of God if I were to not specify whether genocide was right or wrong.

I have been educated in the primary and secondary schools of this fine state and if you were to ask what the Critical Race Theory is to our teachers, I would think that about 70% of the people you polled would not have a clue what that is. Racism, in fact, is not dead. I want my future students to be able to be comfortable talking about race, sex, gender, nationality, and

sexual orientation. But these are brash topics in this nation, and you have to be careful how you teach them.

I chose to testify because I received a poor education when it came to black history or other marginalized groups. For instance, I knew hardly anything about redlining, which was when banks refused to give African American loans, and therefore their families were left with the worst housing available. I was completely ignorant of that reality millions of African Americans had to go through. In my AP US history class, I was never taught about the Japanese-American internment camps that deported American citizens from their homes to nothing more than concentration camps. I was never taught in my world history class about the communist Gulags that one of my ancestors died in. My Great great grandfather died from the Red Terror in the Russian civil war, and we were never taught about the rise of Lenin and the Soviets.

I also want to convey to you that prohibiting teaching about these issues would go against the philosophy of the State standards that I will follow when I become a teacher. The Ohio state standards declare that “The aim of social studies is the promotion of civic competence – the knowledge, intellectual processes, and democratic dispositions required of students to be active and engaged participants in public life.” Teaching that racism still exists in this nation, will promote critical thinking that is so vital for civic competence. House Bill 327 would instead destroy the way that I intend to teach. I want to educate my future students to think for themselves and apply history to their daily lives. I do not intend to push my views upon my students, I want to do the opposite. I want to foster critical thinking so that students can figure out their own views. However, without that raw emotional approach that I intend to take, I would just be teaching the same way many other people teach history as a series of disconnected facts to learn for the test which could simply be looked up on Google.

This bill could potentially cause me to lose a job simply for opening my mouth to speak the truth. Therefore, I implore all of you to oppose House Bill 327 because students in this state are not learning the truth about our history. I simply do not want history to be so watered down that we are indoctrinating our children to be nationalistic. I am a patriot, but a patriot can admit to a country's wrongdoing and still be proud to live in it. Whereas a nationalist simply wants to erase any wrongdoing from the history books. As this generation is learning more about these issues within history, we must address them so that we do not repeat them. Thank you