

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Kelly, and committee members. Thank you for hearing my testimony. This is an important issue. For all of the differences between proponents and opponents, we all want what is best for Ohio's children. We all believe in equality.

I have taught special education in Cleveland for the past seven years. Over the last several months and weeks, I have organized with fellow teachers, monitored the actions of teachers' unions and local school districts, and called each of you to tell you I oppose HB 322.

I oppose these bills because they demand the impossible. They expect me to teach about our country's divisive history and present, impartially. I would have to somehow find a way to teach about racism without acknowledging there are racists. For instance, when we learn about "the terrible things that *happened* in Tulsa, Oklahoma," as one of the bill's sponsors put it, we learn that they are not just passive events. White Americans perpetrated atrocities in Tulsa. As uncomfortable as it may be, the past is not sterile or impartial. People make choices. Choices make history. We must learn lessons from our history.

If HB 322 passes, my students and I will not be able to discuss the root causes of slavery, the Civil War, the Tulsa Race Massacre, voter suppression, and many other volatile chapters of our history. I think we would all agree that history is written by the victors. Consider if the Confederacy had won the Civil War or if Nazi Germany dominated in WWII, how would our history textbooks read? It is important to teach facts, but we have to ask, who decides which facts to include in our narrative, or exclude? These are the questions that demand an education that is both in depth and broad. Who decides when the "true founding of the United States" is? If we want students to think for themselves, they deserve to learn about multiple points of view. How can we suppress the notion that 1619 is when America as we know it began? America would never have had the power it did without the unpaid labor of enslaved Africans in a system designed and perpetuated by racism.

The debate sparked by HB 322 (and 327) has raised a valid question: what is the purpose of education? Some may say the purpose of education is to transmit the values of a society to young people, presenting facts that never provoke students to think or step outside their comfort zone. I disagree with that view. I believe the purpose of education is to equip young people with the tools they will need to face society's challenges and make the world a better place. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wanted a better America for his children. We must be forward-thinking like Dr. King. To succeed in today's world, students need to be courageous critical thinkers and empathetic problem-solvers. To teach students to think critically, teachers must model how it is done. To teach empathy, teachers need to show it.

The vast majority of my students are Black. Many experience poverty, and some live in unsafe or unstable housing. My students often try their best; they and their families believe in the value of education. However, an opportunity gap (sometimes called the achievement gap) exists. My students deserve to understand the systemic racism, reaching back to when enslaved people were not allowed to read or write, that has led to the opportunity gap. They need to know racial injustice in education, prisons, voting, and housing still exists. Awareness is not indoctrination. Knowing the truth will not lead my students to think they are inferior; it will empower them to advocate for what

they know is right. Students need to know the truth even though that truth can sometimes be uncomfortable. Our children are the ones who will be faced with the truth that systemic racism exists, and they are the ones who can fix it.

I believe my Black students benefit from seeing me, a white teacher, advocate for their rights in and out of the classroom. I will continue to oppose bills that in any way suppress my students' ability to fight for the change they wish to see. HB 322 enshrines color blindness, which is the concept that if we just stop talking about race, then racism will go away. The fact is we cannot change what we refuse to see.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Miano

Special Education Teacher