

I am writing to urge you to oppose HB 322, particularly, number 11 of “Controversial Subjects” which forbids school staff from “teaching, instructing or training” that slavery and racism are “anything but deviations” to the founding principles of the United States. This is extremely disrespectful to the lived experience of many of our students and colleagues, and to anyone who with knowledge of American history. If passed, this regressive and unnecessary bills will do great harm to the ability of our students and educators to learn about and understand our history and the issues facing Americans today. Further, it’s anti-democratic in that it discourages our young people from becoming civically engaged in their communities.

As an educator, parent, community activist and lawyer, I am s am deeply saddened that this bill, forbidding the teaching of “controversial” subjects, is currently pending in the Ohio Legislature. It is an assault on everything that I and my colleagues have worked for over the past 25 years in order to build a more diverse, inclusive and school community in Shaker Heights, Ohio.

Both of my children graduated from Shaker schools and were far more prepared for the world at large than most of the students they met at college. They were fortunate to receive a K - 12 education that was grounded in honesty and facts, and to build friendships with a diverse group of people from other backgrounds, cultures, and countries. They grew up having honest conversations with caring and dedicated educators about all the big issues of the day, including racism, discrimination, poverty, and climate change. They and their peers studied history and applied critical thinking skills to explore ways to heal these traumas and to explore ways to build a more caring and inclusive community. All of this knowledge and energy would be lost should HB 322 pass.

As Maya Angelou said:“History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again.”

Thank for your attention. I am counting on you to vote against HB 322.

Respectfully,

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