

My name is Darrell Lausche. First and foremost, I am a life-long citizen of Ohio. I am a 25 year veteran teacher in the Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District. I am a Literacy Specialist and work with students from Kindergarten to Fifth Grade. I am a member of the Cleveland Heights Teachers Union, Local 795, and I am also the Chair of the Ohio Federation of Teachers Human Rights Committee. All of Ohio's students deserve a quality public education based on an honest and comprehensive curriculum that nurtures and develops critical thinking skills without restricting the information that they have a right to access.

According to recently published reports from the 2020 census, Ohio's population is growing more diverse. When bills like HB 322 & 327 are proposed or passed, it sends a message that the histories, contributions, and experiences of Ohio's marginalized populations do not matter. These bills aim to codify a Euro-centric view of the world in the student educational experience. The broadly written language of the bills will make offering courses on Women's studies, Black history, and the like very difficult, if not impossible, without being penalized, whether through district funding loss (as stated in HB 327), or not being able to earn credits towards graduation (as stated in HB 322). Local school board control in addressing the needs of their students and communities is eroded because of a fear that offering those courses could result in litigation.

How are students to be taught an honest history if the tracing of the causes and effects of public policy lead to a discussion that someone feels is "divisive", for example the institution of poll taxes after the ratification of the 15th Amendment to further disenfranchise Black voters or the system of peonage after slavery had been abolished? How do students understand the scientific process and key scientific issues if someone feels a topic is "divisive", because a sincerely held belief does not allow them to accept the opposing viewpoint, for example creationism vs. evolution or human impact on environmental issues like global warming? Yes, there are specific instances written into these bills, but the broad interpretation of much of the language sets up a slippery slope for issues like this.

These two bills limit the resources available to provide students the best possible education they deserve. As we know, Ohio has been in violation of the state constitution for nearly 30 years in the way we fund and resource public schools. The penalties in these laws do nothing to help correct that issue. These two bills actually distract Ohio's citizenry from noticing the Statehouse's lack of adequately addressing that issue. These bills are another thinly veiled attempt to further defund Ohio's public education system and to baselessly erode the confidence of Ohioans in their public schools. I stand in opposition to HB 322 and HB 327.