



DATE: September 20, 2021

TO: Members of the House State and Local Government Committee

FROM: Desiree Tims, President and CEO, Innovation Ohio

RE: Opponent Testimony — HB 322 and HB 327

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Desiree Tims. I serve as President and CEO of Innovation Ohio.

I am here today to oppose House Bill 322 and House Bill 327 in the strongest possible terms.

It's important to note first that these bills are based on inaccurate information.

Far right political organizations are using lies about Critical Race Theory to scare white parents into thinking their children are being taught to feel guilty because of their race.

The very premise of these bills is frankly outrageous.

First, Critical Race Theory is not new. It's been researched and developed by prominent, well respected Black legal scholars for over 40 years. The only thing that's new about Critical Race Theory is that it's now being twisted by political pundits with an agenda.

Second, Critical Race Theory is not a subject being taught in k-12 classrooms. It's an academic concept. It helps professionals in dozens of different fields acknowledge that there is longstanding prejudice embedded in our existing laws and legal systems. Acknowledging this reality allows us to work to rectify unjust outcomes.

No one's K-12 school is teaching this complex subject matter.

And thirdly, we know these bills are part of a national political agenda. Across the country, many of the bills include strikingly similar language, such as the phrase, "divisive concepts." It's unlikely that legislators in multiple states suddenly came up with that phrase all by themselves at roughly the same time.

To summarize, these are politically motivated bills that would ban a huge range of important subjects on the false premise of preventing a graduate level academic concept from being taught in K-12 classrooms.

In practice, these bills will have devastating impacts on education in Ohio for generations to come.

HB 322 appears to ban policy advocacy as part of a classroom experience. Does this mean we're going to ban the time-honored tradition of students coming to the Statehouse to "lobby" for the new state insect, or state rock, or state cookie?

HB 327 would ban teachers in almost every subject area from having students advocate for or against "a specific topic or point of view."

That is incredibly broad language. What counts as a point of view? Evolution? The efficacy of vaccines? The impacts of climate change? The age of the Earth?

In an age when basic facts are often dismissed as partisan, everything can be considered a point of view.

Both of these bills would severely limit the discussion of conscious or unconscious bias. And both would limit discussion of our responsibility to right historical wrongs that still impact our society today.

This failure to educate would be disastrous.

Systemic racism and sexism exist, whether we admit it or not. These bills cannot change that fact.

Instead, they would simply leave our children woefully unprepared to tackle the problems of the world once they enter adulthood.

I will end with a quote from Gary Peller, a constitutional law professor at Georgetown who has worked on Critical Race Theory for over 30 years. He said, "the idea that [CRT] would be easily taught in K-12 ...doesn't really make any sense to me. It's hard stuff. It's asking you to critically examine assumptions that we all make...If it were being taught in K-12, I would think it would be a cause for wild celebration that teachers (were) doing such a fantastic job."

Please consider my testimony and the many powerful testimonies here today. Do not fall victim to a national extremist agenda. Do not pass these dangerous bills.

Thank you.