

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

Donna Long
YWCA Dayton
Ohio State & Local Government Committee
H.B. 322 – Opponent Testimony
September 22, 2021

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Donna Long and I am the Director of Advocacy and Outreach for YWCA Dayton. YWCA is a member of the Ohio Council of YWCAs, a coalition of 14 sister YWs across the state. We strongly oppose House Bill 322.

YWCA is focused on eliminating racism, empowering women, and fighting for peace, justice, and dignity for all. In 1870, seven women in the Dayton area joined together to determine what they could do to elevate women in their community. The result became YWCA Dayton. Over the last 151 years, we have been at the forefront of the most pressing social movements and that devotion continues today.

It is because of this mission that we oppose HB 322. This legislation would limit the growth that comes from learning about others' life experiences and has nothing to do with protecting Ohio's children. Its implementation would ultimately hinder our mission. We are opposed on behalf of the following groups and for the following reasons.

1. **STUDENTS:** HB 322 holds students back from engaging with perspectives outside of their own, thus barring them from cultivating critical thought-- something that is necessary to build a successful future. YWCA strongly believes that our children deserve a strong and realistic foundation to their understanding of race and gender. The passage of this legislation also leaves Ohio children vulnerable to real world problems, college and adult life, and understanding their own worldviews in a world that is *already discussing these subjects in accessible formats, such as on the internet.*
2. **EDUCATORS:** YWCA recognizes that teachers today are expected to do more than ever. In addition to teaching, they act as stand-in parents, nurses, therapists, and more. COVID-19 has already made their jobs more difficult and, should this legislation pass, it will create more of a barrier for teachers to ready their students for the world. We also believe that this bill contains vague language that may lead to self-censure of teachers who may fear losing their jobs when approaching real history. It restricts the curricula, teaching methods, and lesson plans. This puts a tremendous burden on teachers, who

are molding the minds of tomorrow's leaders and workers. It is punishing teachers for teaching: a field that is already underfunded and undervalued.

3. COMMUNITIES: This legislation centers the history of white Americans while ignoring the history of people of color. The passage would cripple the needs of communities of color and discount the pain, suffering, and *resilience* of these communities.

All children deserve an opportunity to learn the stories of their predecessors, and for non-white students, these histories are essential to understanding themselves. Erasing or muddling the true history of the US will harm all Americans. Additionally, learning about diversity, equity, and inclusion is imperative for cultivating well-rounded Ohio citizens. We know that more diversity is good for the Ohio economy, for our social relations, and for uplifting our state to the best it can be.

YWCA Dayton will always stand in favor of women and people of color. Our histories and stories matter. We are looking for legislation that reflects the needs of *all* Ohioans. HB 322 does not provide this.

Thank you for listening to the perspective of the YWCA. I am happy to answer any questions you have.