

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: 9/20/2021

Name: Fan Jiang

Are you representing: Yourself _____ Organization x

Organization (If Applicable): Athens Asian American Alliance

Position/Title: President

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes x No _____

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 322

Specific Issue: _____

Are you testifying as a: Proponent _____ Opponent x Interested Party _____

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes x No _____

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? 5 mins

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

We oppose House Bill 322. See attached letter.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State & Local Government Committee, my name is Fan Jiang, and I am the president of Athens Asian American Alliance. The mission of Athens Asian American Alliance is to engage in community services and inclusion, advocate and support for social justice, and provide belonging and friendship, for all Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) in Athens area. Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony in strong opposition to House Bill 322, which seeks to regulate curriculum and instruction at an unprecedented level to suppress racism and sexism related discussions in K-12 schools.

There are nearly 1.7 million students enrolled in public schools in Ohio and over 30% of them are Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color. (Ohioynumbers.com 2020) Many of these students face discrimination and microaggressions in their daily lives, solely because of their race and color. And sadly, a lot of these happen in k-12 classrooms. Because children are especially vulnerable, studies have shown that racism and discrimination have traumatic impact on child and adolescent development and health. And while children and adolescents who are the targets of racism experience the most significant impact, bystanders are also adversely affected by racism.

As an AAPI advocacy group, one of our missions is to respond to the rapid rise of animosity towards Asian Americans. We want to have an open discussion about how racism is behind anti-Asian violence, and we want to teach our children that Covid is not equal to Asian and no one should be targeted merely because of their race or color. However, HB 322 states that in order to discuss “current events”, teachers need to “explore such issues from diverse and contending perspectives”, adding hugely unnecessary burden to the teachers and therefore silencing any meaningful teaching moments.

Racism and sexism are real issues in our society. They will not disappear simply because the teachers are not talking about them, or the students are not discussing them. Racism do not just exist in theory. They are real life experiences that could hurt deeply. Standing next to me is Laura Zhang, a freshman in Athens High School and she has some compelling stories to tell.

Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State & Local Government Committee, my name is Laura Zhang, and I am a 9th grade student in Athens City School District. In strong opposition to House Bill 322, I want to share some of my personal encounters with racism.

During seventh grade when the virus first began spreading to America, I was sitting in class one day when our teacher was talking to us about how we shouldn't be blaming Chinese people for the virus. I felt uncomfortable and singled out, being the singular Asian person in that entire class. One classmate sitting next to me turned to point a finger at me and said with wide eyes, “She's Chinese. She's Asian.” I don't think I have ever felt so ashamed, so humiliated in my

entire life. At that moment, I wished I wasn't Chinese, wished I didn't look different, wished that everything unique about my identity would vanish and disappear forever.

A few weeks later, I was going to class when a group of eighth graders started walking behind me. Apparently one of them had been absent awhile, so one of their friends asked where they had been. They saw me ahead of them, and they said, "I was in China, eating bats." I felt so degraded, so small as they all snickered behind me. I couldn't focus that entire day when that sentence they said echoed in my head.

These experiences are a small portion of the racial discrimination I have faced. But people don't recognize that those small insults and slurs cling to the people that they are degrading. Although I have many memories from my childhood, these experiences are always the ones that stand out the most. Those words impacted me, and although I kept repeating to myself over and over again that they were just being rude, and that those words meant nothing, I remembered every second while those words were being said. I felt disgusting and demeaned, letting those insults take over me until I started to believe them.

Naturally, I wanted to report this and speak to my trusted teacher. However, HB322 regulates school districts training to the extent that teachers are not allowed opportunities to learn how to properly handle different ideas and discussions related to racism and sexism. Without the proper training, my trusted teacher wouldn't be able to help me as much as they could and should HB 322 get passed, they might even have to worry about breaching laws while just trying to help their student.

We respectfully urge you to oppose HB 322, which by suppressing the discussions around racism and sexism, could hurt the society deeper as a whole and lead to greater division and conflict.

Thank you for allowing us to testify and we'll be happy to take any questions you have.

Sincerely,

Fan Jiang and Laura Zhang

Athens Asian American Alliance