

**Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322**  
**Jennifer M. Forshey**  
**State and Local Government Committee**  
**September 20, 2021**

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Representative Kelly, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony. My name is Jennifer Forshey. I am a 15-year public high school Social Studies teacher presently serving in the Rocky River City Schools. I strongly oppose HB 322.

As a Social Studies teacher I oppose these bills on many grounds but the two I would like to highlight today are the bill's opposition to teacher education and/or professional development grounded in what the bill would call "prohibited concepts" and the bill's demand that there be no discussion of "current events, widely debated, and current controversial issues of public policy or social affairs."

Over the course of my teaching experience, it is evident that students are best able to thrive and learn in communities where they feel seen and accepted. Often this manifests itself in recognizing their extracurricular activities and interests outside of the classroom. However, it also requires me to know who they are as individuals and what perspectives they bring to our classroom. The professional development I have received over the course of my career has provided insight into understanding those perspectives shaped by race, ethnicity, socio-economics, gender and sexuality. They have helped provide me with a vocabulary that ensures my students feel welcome and reinforced the importance of recognizing multiple perspectives as we learn. I think this is especially critical as we try to foster ongoing discussions or dialogues about creating and maintaining respectful pluralistic communities.

I am also very concerned about HB 322's prohibition aimed at the discussion of current events or controversial issues of public policy. Prior to becoming a teacher, I spent my first career working in public policy at the White House's Office of Management and Budget. I was privileged to serve two presidencies during my tenure, including the end of the Clinton administration and the first-term of the Bush administration. During that time, I was able to watch and participate in bi-partisan debate and exploration. In the intervening years, political polarization has increased dramatically. Rather than conscientious discussion, political discourse is mired or stagnant. Teaching students to engage in meaningful and thoughtful discussions not only offers them the skills needed to be fully civically engaged, but it offers all of us a future where the nation can return to a thoughtful discussion of ideas.

As a teacher, I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and vote NO on this bill.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to submit written testimony. I would be happy to answer any additional questions or provide input as needed. You may reach me at [jforshey@gmail.com](mailto:jforshey@gmail.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
Jennifer M. Forshey