



**Opponent Testimony - written**  
**House Bill 322**  
**Jona Hilario**  
**OPAWL Co-Director**  
**State and Local Government Committee**  
**Sept. 20, 2021**

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

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Jona Hilario, I am a resident of Columbus, Ohio, an immigrant from the Philippines, a mother of two kids currently enrolled in the Hilliard City School District and current Statewide Co-Director of OPAWL. We are a statewide grassroots community of Asian and Asian American and Pacific Islander Women and non-binary people in Ohio. Our organization is a multi-ethnic, multi-generational community and we represent the diverse diaspora from Asia and the Pacific Islands.

As a part of the Asian and AAPI community in Ohio and as a mother to two biracial children, I oppose this bill because all students including my kids and their peers deserve to learn accurate and complete American history, which includes the history of Asians and AAPIs. Additionally, racism experienced by AAPIs is inextricably tied to American history and cannot be ignored or erased. Our children deserve to learn about what factors led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and U.S. involvement in important historical events like the Secret War in Laos, which unbeknownst to many Americans was the most heavily bombed country in world history.

If this bill passes, a censored and skewed version of history and current events that highlights a select few will be taught in the classroom, completely ignoring and erasing the history of Indigenous, Black, Brown, Asian, Pacific Islander, other

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communities of color, and the LGBTQIA+ communities. This bill is so vaguely worded in terms of defining what is and is not allowed to be taught in the classroom. The chilling effect of this purposefully vague language is that our teachers will be fearful of approaching topics that are challenging but factual. It is imperative, now more than ever, for our children to learn about these events as they are important parts of our country's foundational history.

Tessa Xuan, OPAWL's co-director, talks about their experiences growing up in Ohio and the need for AAPI history to be taught in Ohio public schools.

"As someone who grew up going to Ohio public schools (Kettering, Perkins, and Mason), my peers and I were deprived of the opportunity to learn about Asian American history and the history of other communities of color, resulting in mass ignorance and an acceptance of harmful stereotypes, which ultimately led to violence like the mass shootings we saw in Atlanta and Indianapolis earlier this year."

Leah Mejia, Principal at St. Vincent Prep Academy and OPAWL member, outlines what is at stake for educators if HB 322 & HB 327 pass.

"House Bills 322 and 327, guised as bills to eliminate discrimination and the teaching of discriminatory practices, do the exact opposite for our students. With these bills, State Legislators effectively add a color-blind lens to the way we will teach history to our students. Teachers are prohibited from providing their students with a historically accurate account of our nation's history and instead must ensure that individuals do not feel "discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress" on account of their race.

The passage of these bills will do nothing for our students of color, who have constant psychological distress due to the very events we are no longer allowed to address. HB 322 and 327 are cowardice pieces of legislation that seek to allow white individuals to continue to live in ignorant comfort. Instead, we should turn our focus in

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education to ensure that our students are taught facts and the critical thinking skills to form their own viewpoints when given the complete picture.”

As a parent I want my children to learn the honest truth about the history of this nation. This bill limits opportunities for them to learn about the different experiences that different people groups have had in history. I believe my kids, with the help of their teachers, are fully capable of handling complex and sometimes seemingly conflicting ideas. We do not need legislators stepping in and dictating what lessons are relevant in their learning.

I also want all children to have the chance to learn about the history of the Asian and AAPI communities in this country. I believe this is an important step for addressing the rising Anti-Asian racism and harassment that is happening in this country. This bill effectively threatens educators who want to address racism experienced by minority groups including Asians and AAPIs with punitive measures and this is simply unacceptable. Our communities’ response to racist laws and ideas are part of this nation’s history of working towards a more perfect union and should be included in our curriculums.

As a mom of school-aged children, an immigrant and a AAPI community leader, I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and vote NO on this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Jona Hilario

Co-Director

OPAWL-Building AAPI feminist leadership

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