

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322
Jon C. Walden
State and Local Government Committee
September 21, 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 testify today. My name is Jon Walden. I am a father to a high school student and attorney. I also have had the pleasure to work for the State of Ohio for more than twenty years, including many years with the Ohio Attorney General's office. I write to offer my strong opposition to HB 322.

I oppose HB 322 because it would make bad law because it is not borne out of any need, but merely part of a string of essentially copycat bills that are being offered in other states. This proposed bill does nothing to strengthen Ohio and make it better or more competitive. Instead, this bill merely uses vague and subjective language driven more by political agendas meant to divide rather than make us better. Likewise, this proposed law uses that vague language to encourage narrow, singular viewpoints that perpetuate racist, discriminatory, and exclusionary behavior, trauma, and narratives.

This proposed bill also serves to remove a hallmark of Ohio legislation and by attempting to remove Local Control from communities over their educational environment and curriculum. Local control over community education should not be replaced by a singular viewpoint over teaching issues that might be sensitive. School districts and local boards of education should continue to interpret and apply their educational standards.

Likewise, this proposed bill seeks to limit collaborative and equitable teaching. Our children need honesty in education – even if the truth does not always fit the narrative of the idyllic world that textbooks of old attempted to portray. We can only reach our potential if we are willing to have open and honest discussions in our communities and classrooms.

Finally, HB 322 would hinder Ohio's desire for strong workforce development by driving a diverse and competitive talent away. Ohio and its citizens deserve and demand better.

I urge you to vote not on HB 322. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon C. Walden, Esq.
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