

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322
Kate Elliott
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 Kate Elliott. I am a former early childhood educator and a mother of two. I am also white. I strongly oppose House Bill 322.

I oppose these bills because those who do not learn from history are forced to repeat it. If we cannot look back pragmatically on the way in which our nation was founded and the impact that can have on how our nation functions, we will remain trapped in the opportunity divide that we see today. We claim to be the land of opportunity and the American Dream, yet as of 2019, half of American families could combine all their assets and still only make up 1% of our nation's wealth.ⁱ

The issues of opportunity and achievement are complicated and nuanced. It is our responsibility to effectively educate future generations and arm them to work together in the future to solve problems like climate change, the evolution of warfare, and a fracturing economy. We do not do this by sheltering them from difficult topics. We do this by training teachers to have these difficult conversations in an effective way that *won't* create guilt, anxiety or a sense of superiority or inferiority for any child involved in the conversation. We do this by equipping parents with ways to help their children process these topics outside of the classroom. We do this by facing our challenges, not trying to sweep them under a rug with a bill that uses vague language.

Speaking of language, as a professional writer, I object to your wording of this bill. It is painfully useless. How dangerously vague can you be when banning "divisive concepts"? As an atheist, I find it "divisive" to require my child to listen to the Pledge of Allegiance every morning. Pledging allegiance to an inanimate object instead their friends and neighbors, claiming that this nation is "under God"—I find this divisive. Would you like me to use your HB

to eradicate the Pledge of Allegiance from our schools? Stop wasting time and taxpayer dollars with these bills that are impossible to effectively enforce, will burden our legal systems with petty suits, and are only meant as lip service to constituents in an attempt to secure future elections for their sponsors.

As a mother, writer, and former educator, I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and vote NO on this ridiculous bill.

Respectfully submitted,
Kate Elliott

ⁱ <https://www.stlouisfed.org/open-vault/2020/december/has-wealth-inequality-changed-over-time-key-statistics>