

Testimony

provided to the
State and Local Government Committee
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From
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Thank you for your public service and your time listening to testimony today.

As a school board member in the Talawanda City School District, I take seriously the idea of local control, and the responsibilities I have been elected to uphold in my office. On these and a number of other grounds, I strongly object to HB 322 and 327, both of which will lead to the state educational authorities intervening in local district matters related to teaching and the supervision of teachers.

These bills are 1) not needed, 2) overstep state authority, 3) will lead to extremist witch-hunts and expensive law suits, 4) diminish the professional authority and responsibility of our teaching workforce, and 5) are objected to by hundreds of educational and professional organizations, including the Buckeye Association of School Administrators, Ohio Education Association, and the Ohio Federation of Teachers.

1. These bills are not needed; they solve no problem that actually exists.
Ohio public schools are legally bound to teaching the Ohio state standards, and these standards do not include teachings about critical race theory, and require that teachers teach history and politics from multiple perspectives. There is no published and confirmed evidence that critical race theory, a legal theory taught in graduate education primarily in the field of law, is being taught in K-12 public schools.
2. These bills dangerously expand state authority over local schools.
Public schools must balance federal, state, and local oversight, and local control has been eroding for several decades. At present, Ohio provides curriculum standards that local districts are responsible to teach in classrooms. These bills attempt to legislate particular concepts and particular forms of teaching that curriculum, in ways that are vague and will invite a witch-hunt environment against public school teachers. This is big government at its absolute worst.

3. This legislation will lead to extremist witch-hunts, and a host of expensive, time-consuming lawsuits.
In [this article](#) by Forbes columnist Peter Greene, the details of similar legislation showcase how, if passed, HB 322 and 327 will lead to extremist witch-hunts. In the name of rooting out so-called “indoctrination,” citizens are being encouraged to report teachers who are allegedly indoctrinating in classroom, a charge which will be difficult at best to prove and which will lead to a host of expensive lawsuits for public education institutions.
4. Respecting the academic freedom of our teachers is important in being able to recruit excellent professionals for our teaching force.
“Academic freedom” does not mean teachers can teach whatever they wish; it means that teachers have the responsibility to choose methods and approaches that meaningfully engage students and help them learn the approved content. There are professional and policy guidelines that already prohibit teaching that is aimed toward indoctrination.
5. This legislation has the strong public disapproval of educators, scholars, and assorted public interest organizations around the country.
Hundreds of organizations have now passed statements condemning these types of bills, including the [American Historical Association](#). This statement includes the following statement:

“First, these bills risk infringing on the right of faculty to teach and of students to learn. The clear goal of these efforts is to suppress teaching and learning about the role of racism in the history of the United States. Purportedly, any examination of racism in this country’s classrooms might cause some students “discomfort” because it is an uncomfortable and complicated subject. But the ideal of informed citizenship necessitates an educated public. Educators must provide an accurate view of the past in order to better prepare students for community participation and robust civic engagement.” (Joint Statement on Legislative Efforts to Restrict Education about Racism in American History, para 2).

For all these reasons, I strongly urge the House to throw out HB 322 and 327, and aim your legislative powers at problems that actually exist.