

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: _____

Name: _____

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable): _____

Position/Title: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Best Contact Telephone: _____ Email: _____

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): _____

Specific Issue: _____

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

Will your testimony be written, spoken, or both? _____

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.

Opponent Testimony on HB 322
Ohio House State and Local Government Committee
September 21, 2021

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the committee.

My name is Laura Podalsky. I am an Ohio voter from Columbus, a parent of public-school children and a professor at The Ohio State University. I strongly oppose HB 322.

As a parent, a professor and as a citizen of Ohio, I oppose this bill for three reasons:

- There already is a body (the State Board of Education) responsible for the review of curriculum. We should be relying on educational experts (not politicians) and a *deliberative* process to design, discuss and debate curricular reforms in K-12 schools.
- Several of the prohibitions put forth in HB322 (Sec. 3313.6028) amount to censorship. Certainly, we can all agree that people should not be the object of discrimination because of their race and ethnicity. However, there are plenty of ways that we can and should debate the history and nature of racism, how the notion of meritocracy has been enacted over time, the foundational principles of our country, etc. We should *want* our schools, our teachers and our students to consider and discuss these topics in complex ways. Indeed, if, as stated in Sec. 3301.079, we want to “instill life-long learning by providing essential knowledge and skills in the liberal arts tradition”, we should embrace the opportunity for students to learn from diverse viewpoints and to develop the critical thinking skills necessary to become informed citizens.
- HB 322 is un-workable. Sec. 3313.6028 (C) declares that a student who “completes a course that includes any of the concepts described in divisions (A) (1) to (11) ...” cannot use that course to fulfill graduation requirements

for high school. How will this be assessed? Is one complaint or accusation sufficient? By anybody? Will there be an evaluation of the evidence by administrators within the school or by some other body? What will be the criteria used to make this assessment? And how will we ensure that the criteria is the same across schools and districts?

My eldest son went to a Columbus City School and recently graduated from Rice University in Houston, Texas. He was able to gain advanced critical-thinking skills from the diverse readings (from *The Odyssey* to *The Song of Solomon*) and robust debates that occurred as part of his public-school education and through interactions with the diverse student body. My daughter is currently in the CCS system and is similarly benefiting from reading and discussing varied materials through the guidance of dedicated specialists trained to teach in K-12 settings. Please do not diminish the abilities of teachers to select materials that will allow our children to grapple with complex issues in nuanced ways.

I urge you to vote NO on this bill and to let educators in schools make decisions about curriculum.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in written form.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura A. Podalsky
187 Glencoe Rd.
Columbus, OH 43214

Opponent Testimony on HB 327
Ohio House State and Local Government Committee
September 21, 2021

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the committee.

My name is Laura Podalsky. I am an Ohio voter from Columbus, a parent of public-school children and a professor at The Ohio State University. I strongly oppose HB 327.

As a parent, a professor and as a citizen of Ohio, I oppose this bill for three reasons:

- There already is a body (the State Board of Education) responsible for the review of curriculum. We should be relying on educational experts (not politicians) and a *deliberative* process to design, discuss and debate curricular reforms in K-12 schools.
- Several of the prohibitions put forth in HB327 (Sec. 3313.6027) amount to censorship. Certainly, we can all agree that no “one nationality, ethnicity, race or sex is inherently superior to another...”. However, there are plenty of ways that we can and should debate the history and nature of racism (including the notion that racism is structural and not limited to the past), how the notion of meritocracy has been enacted over time, the foundational principles of our country, etc. We should *want* our schools, our teachers and our students to consider and discuss these topics in complex ways. Indeed, if, as stated in Sec. 3301.079, we want to “instill life-long learning by providing essential knowledge and skills in the liberal arts tradition”, we should embrace the opportunity for students to learn from diverse viewpoints and to develop the critical thinking skills necessary to become informed citizens.
- HB 327 is un-workable and excessively punitive. Sec. 3313.6027 (C) declares that a school district will loses its state funding if a school district

“knowingly violates the prohibitions prescribed in division (B) of this section.” How will this be assessed? What will be the criteria used by the (state-level?) superintendent to make this assessment? Will there be any appeals process or are we placing all of the decision-making power in the hands of one individual?

My eldest son went to a Columbus City School and recently graduated from Rice University in Houston, Texas. He was able to gain advanced critical-thinking skills from the diverse readings (from *The Odyssey* to *The Song of Solomon*) and robust debates that occurred as part of his public-school education and through interactions with the diverse student body. My daughter is currently in the CCS system and is similarly benefiting from reading and discussing varied materials through the guidance of dedicated specialists trained to teach in K-12 settings. Please do not diminish the abilities of teachers to select materials and topics that will allow our children to grapple with complex issues in nuanced ways.

I urge you to vote NO on this bill and to let educators in schools make decisions about curriculum.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in written form.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura A. Podalsky
187 Glencoe Rd.
Columbus, OH 43214