

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 Lydia Robertson, and I am a first-year student at Ohio State University, after graduating from Grandview Heights High School. I strongly oppose HB 322.

I felt compelled to speak my opinion on this bill due to my experience with education on racial injustice. During my senior year of high school, I took several classes at Ohio State University, including a course called History of American Criminal Justice. This course opened my eyes to the brutal, racist history the United States has been a part of.

Not only did I learn the full history of slavery in the United States, but the history of lynching, including the death of a fourteen-year-old boy named Emmett Till by a white mob. I learned about the inaction of the police, newspapers, and both Southern and Northern elected officials who refused to pass anti-lynching legislation.

I learned about the Federal Government's War on Drugs and its past and continued effect on black families. This legislation created a minimum sentence of 5 years without parole for the possession of five grams of crack cocaine, a type of drug that was common among black communities, while the possession of five hundred grams of powder cocaine, a type of drug that was common among rich white communities, held the same sentence. Legislation like this has caused a racial disparity in prison systems across the country. African Americans are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of white Americans (<https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/color-of-justice-racial-and-ethnic-disparity-in-state-prisons/>). To begin correcting this terrible injustice that continues to plague our society, we must first learn about the injustices of the past and what brought us to this point in history.

My History of American Criminal Justice course taught me devastating but true facts about a history that I continue to live in and benefit from. These facts were crucial in shaping my understanding of the world around me, and the injustices that have occurred in the past and continue to systematically occur today. To reduce racial injustice in Ohio, we must teach the complete history and current truth of racism and oppression in the United States.

As a student that has experienced Ohio education on racial injustice, I ask you to consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and vote NO on this bill.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions. You may also reach me at lydiavrobertson@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Lydia Robertson

Student