

Opponent Testimony on HB 322
Ohio House State and Local Government Committee
September 20, 2021

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Mary Dixon. I am a retired educator and an Ohio voter from Gahanna. I strongly oppose HB 322.

As a school psychologist I oppose this bill because it demeans our state, seeks to punish educators for doing their jobs, is detrimental to family mental and emotional security, and makes our students less accepting of others.

If this bill were enacted economic development in Ohio would be adversely affected. The competitive talent that currently exists in Ohio would be inclined to leave creating a weaker workforce. In addition, new companies and their employees would be reluctant to settle in Ohio because of the narrow world view perpetrated in this bill. Just recently Governor DeWine proposed spending Ohio money to put up billboards in other states to attract new business. HB 322 would create a larger gap in new business than the one that already exists.

Families would be affected by HB322 also. The bill, as it is currently written, ignores the anguish that is created when families are hurt by outdated curriculum content that remains unchallenged. Families are also impacted because such a bill creates a barrier between families, educators, and school districts and thus creates disharmony and distrust.

The students who are the recipients of the limited education proposed in HB 322 will be sadly deficient in the skills and viewpoints to compete and cooperate in an increasingly global society because of the lack of empathy created in this limited curriculum. This curriculum encourages narrow viewpoints that feed racism and exclusion of others. Abuse and trauma are perpetuated and tolerated because they are presented as being “normal.” As a school psychologist I can attest to the bullying that already occurs in our schools. This would make it worse.

Our educational system has always prided itself on the concept of academic freedom. Implicit in this concept is the idea that our educators are trained to follow the curriculum designated by the school district and to also distinguish times when additional relevant information should be added to enhance the learning experience. HB322 threatens and intimidates educators without clear standards for violations. In addition, the concept of local control of school districts is violated because the autonomy of school districts and families to interpret and apply educational standards is removed. These issues will end in creating distrust among educators, students and families.

Lastly, our democracy is affected by HB 322 because the understanding of American institutions, systems, policies, and power dynamics will be limited by this proposed bill.

I urge you to vote NO on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any additional questions or provide input as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Dixon, Ph.D.