

Megan Taylor
Opposition Statement to Ohio BH 332 and 327
September 21, 2021

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Kelly and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today as an opponent to HB 322 and HB 327. My name is Megan Taylor, and I am from Grove City, Ohio.

On first glance at the bills, they may appear to support anti-discrimination and fairness in our schools. Under the guise of protecting our youth, veiled in false patriotism and feigned attempts at promoting equality, these bills do little besides stoke politicized fear and true divisiveness, and ultimately limit free speech and the free exchange of ideas.

The sponsors of these bills demonstrate an egregious lack of faith in our children, our educators and our local government. I would like to talk about how my experience as a mom and community member in Grove City and as a Speech Language Pathologist in Columbus have led me to believe this bill will do far more harm than good for Ohio youth and education.

I ask that the legislators trust our teachers. My own kids are in elementary school. What I can say so far about Ohio teachers, is that they are awesome. They love our kids, they love education. And they are so very tired. The threat of having a teaching license revoked or causing your district to lose funds is far too great of a burden to place on educators who are just trying to do a good job. These House Bills seem to assume a problem with our current educators and the way they are teaching our kids. They are looking for a problem that doesn't exist in a widespread way in our schools. Our teachers know how to present difficult subject matter with nuance, and to frame learning to support critical thinking in age-appropriate ways. These bills seem to purport that we have a problem with educators attempting to brainwash our kids. Our teachers are people, from the same communities we live in, that care about our kids. Let them teach.

I ask that the legislators trust our local school administration and boards. The school districts in Ohio vary significantly. My kids' school in Grove City, part of the larger South-Western City School District, is much more economically, socially and racially diverse than any place I grew up. I am so thrilled my children have the opportunity to discover similarities and differences with a wide variety of peers and families. That said, our district is starkly different from the one my nieces and nephew attend in Gallia and Madison counties, which are in turn night and day from the Columbus City School District and charter schools my therapy clients attend. Children all over Ohio deserve quality and comprehensive education related to history, social studies, civics, and more. The House Bills' limiting of resources and use of established curriculum takes away our ability to make choices on the local level related to what may be best for our precise student populations and may hinder their opportunities in higher education. I am expressly concerned about the limitations on resources in underserved communities based on perceived noncompliance with these bills. Teachers and school districts already work every day within existing laws protecting students from discrimination. We need to trust the multitude of teachers

unions, school districts and academic groups that have stated that this is bad legislation that muzzles our teachers and will hurt our students all over Ohio.

Finally, I ask that the legislators trust our kids. These bills give Ohio's children, my children, far less credit than they are due. Kids are smart. Although only in elementary school, one of my favorite things about my kids, and the kids I work with, is watching their little wheels turn. Presenting them with information, or problems or a challenge, and listening to them ask questions, make hypotheses and reach a conclusion – is one of the most magical and rewarding things about being a parent and an adult privileged to work with youth. Sometimes the conclusion they reach is a solution, an opinion, or a search for more answers – or a determination that something should change. I am so excited to see how these skills progress as my own kids grow through the upper grade levels to high school and beyond. We need to trust our kids to be able to hear difficult, and as the House Bills put it, divisive things. We need to trust our kids to take information and let themselves feel - feel uncomfortable, or sad, or mad, and decide what to do about it.

Look, this country's history contains ugliness. The impact of our history can be ugly. Our current events are fraught with difficult topics. Hiding that does service to no one. Especially when you consider that on the other side of the ugliness is beauty. Beauty in the lessons of perseverance and allyship and change. And learning about all of that while developing critical thinking skills, is where we find hope. Hope and drive to keep making this country the place it should be, for everyone.

Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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