

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322
Rachel Scott
State and Local Government Committee
9/22/12

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 Rachel Scott. I am a working mother of two young boys, and I strongly oppose HB 322.

As a parent of a child attending public school in Ohio, I believe it is crucial for our educators to be empowered to teach our young people about the many complex truths of our country's history and present. I worry that these bills will severely limit their ability to have thoughtful reflection and dialogue about basic facts of our history that are too often glossed over — things like red-lining in the housing industry and its enduring impact on wealth disparities, or the lasting effects of excluding Black veterans from full access to benefits of the GI Bill. These are parts of our history that I did not learn about until I was an adult, but they are immensely important to understanding both our past and our society today.

Furthermore, I am concerned that these bills will sow fear about talking openly in the classroom about race and differences. This legislation is rooted in a misconception that “color blindness” is the right approach to navigating difference. But “color blindness” actually does harm by denying and erasing the experiences of students of color and the countless barriers and inequities, large and small, that they have faced. In my own youth I was primarily taught by well-meaning teachers and other adults who believed in “color blindness” so that's what I was raised on. Only many years later as an adult did I begin to realize that this left me wearing a set of blinders — well-intentioned but conveniently able to keep systems of disadvantage comfortably out of view. I am still on a journey to unlearn this myself, and I am trying hard to raise my boys differently, without those same blinders.

If these bills become law then many educators will be afraid to have nuanced conversations about our past and present out of fear that these could be mistakenly construed as “divisive concepts.” In fact, I believe that the only way to overcome the current division in our country is to turn *toward* and not away from these parts of our history and their influence on the present. As a (white) parent, I want my (white) boys to be able to learn about the full picture of our great nation's history — the many noble and admirable moments, along with the moments of injustice and inequity that we must remember and work to understand in order to move forward and continue bending the arc of history toward justice.

As a parent and a concerned citizen of Ohio, I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and vote NO on this bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,
Rachel Scott