

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: September 20, 2021

Name: Richard Doringo

Are you representing: Yourself Organization

Organization (If Applicable):

Position/Title: High School Teacher

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

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 322

Specific Issue: The language and possible impact of the bill on Ohio schools.

Are you testifying as a: Proponent Opponent Interested Party

Are you testifying: In-Person Written-Only

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.)

How much time will your testimony require?

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Richard Doringo and I am a high school history and social studies teacher with 24 years of experience in Northeast Ohio schools. I am strongly opposed to House bill HB 322, which would prevent Ohio students from receiving an honest, accurate education.

I would like to offer written testimony specifically about **HB 322**. As written HB 322 is inherently contradictory and will hinder the teaching of this country's primary documents and political values.

The very language of HB 322 is contradictory and makes a thorough teaching of American history impossible. The bill proposes to regulate "the teaching of certain current events and certain concepts regarding race and sex in public schools." It goes on to state in Section 1 b that the state's curriculum should include a study of the original texts of the founding documents including "the Constitution of the United States and its amendments..." Race and gender, however, are topics clearly addressed in the Constitution to specifically correct injustices surrounding racial and gender discrimination.

Racial discrimination in the form of slavery was sanctioned in Article 1 of the Constitution in terms of the Three-fifths compromise and the regulation of the slave trade. This long history of racial exploitation and brutality was ended with the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865. Following the war Republican congressmen led the charge to correct this history of discrimination by passing what we know as the Reconstruction Amendments: the 13th abolishes most forms of chattel slavery, the 14th defines citizenship, and the 15th prohibits discrimination in voting based on race. Will the Ohio legislature, in determining "certain concepts," then redact parts of the Constitution they find inconvenient? Are we teachers expected to skip some Amendments in our teaching of these founding documents?

Furthermore, Sec. 3313.6028, number 11 states that "With respect to their relationship to American values, slavery and racism are anything other than deviations from, betrayals of, or failures to live up to the authentic founding principles of the United States, which include liberty and equality." A vast majority of the founders of this country, many of whom were slave holders, including five of the first seven presidents, defended the institution of slavery and failed to give equal rights to free Blacks. The attainment of these rights, regardless of why they were kept from group, were gained through a heroic struggle for freedom and democracy. Are we now to teach that these rights just somehow magically appeared?

A further example is the "sexual" topics that also may be included in HB 322. The 19th Amendment, enacted in 1920, prohibits the discrimination in voting based on gender. The movement for the political equality of women was a 144 year struggle. The Suffragists, especially those in the early 20th century, faced great political, social and cultural obstacles and suffered even jail time and torture in the struggle for the right to vote. These "failures" – the fact that they were not given these rights from the beginning – was a conscious discrimination against

women. Is the 19th Amendment, too, regarded as a topic that is forbidden? Are these heroines of American liberty no longer part of the story of our democracy?

The struggles for racial and gender equality are monumental achievements in the evolution of our democracy and should be studied and praised in our school's curriculum. HB 322 gives politicians in the legislature the power to decide the content of our classrooms. That means that at any time, depending on the political winds, political parties can censor topics they subjectively deem as inappropriate or inconvenient.

The decisions about schools' curriculum should be kept in the hands of professional educators and administrators who have the responsibility to protect the best interest of our students in making them well-rounded thinkers, learners and citizens.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote **NO** on HB 322. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.