

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322 and HB 327

Sarah Myers

State and Local Government Committee

September 22, 2021

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 Sarah Myers. I am an OH constituent and social worker. I strongly oppose both HBs 322 and 327.

As a social worker, I oppose these bills because they will critically impair professional capabilities of Ohio social workers. They will also severely limit the possibility of a full educational foundation at every level of schooling.

Social work was specifically founded to help individuals and society at large deal with social and economic inequality. A defining feature of our profession is our attention to environmental forces that create and contribute to obstacles.

In order to do this effectively, we must continually work to raise awareness of our own biases to overcome them. Licensed social workers are required to accrue a certain number of continuing education credits every year, which often pertain to topics these bills call “divisive” or “prohibited.”

The passage of these bills will mean that no faculty or university will be able to offer CEUs relating to these topics, which will limit professional development opportunities, adding an unnecessary challenge to the practice of social work.

Why would I want to practice social work in OH?

These bills also create a barrier to educating new social workers. Ohio has 35 programs of social work that are accredited by the Council on Social Work

Education. In order to be accredited, social work programs specifically must address anti-racism, diversity, equity and inclusion in practice.

During both my Bachelors and Masters programs, discussions were expected about our personal racial, ethnic, gender, and religious identities.

Finally, a practicum is the capstone of every social work program. Students are required to commit 600 hours to a service learning project. This is something else that sets our profession apart, and also is required for program accreditation. None of the social work programs in the state would be able to require that under HB 322.

Why would I want to study social work in Ohio?

If fact, I don't know if I could, if there would be any accredited programs.

As a parent raising a child in Ohio schools, these bills impose a state viewpoint for my child and will limit opportunities for their developing mind to regularly practice skills in critical thinking. It would also model for them a practice of overlooking the lived experiences of their friends and neighbors affected by ignorance and bias.

You cannot address a problem if you don't have language for it. Implementing these bills will hurt the future leaders of Ohio.

As a social worker and an engaged parent in Ohio schools, I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HBs 322 and 327 and vote NO on these bills.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any additional questions or provide input as needed.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Myers