

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322
Shelly Lazarus, Parent, Grandparent and Watchful Ohio Resident
State and Local Government Committee
September 20, 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 Shelly Lazarus. I am a former educator, thoughtful community member and grandparent of children in the Cleveland and Columbus communities. I strongly oppose HB 322.

As a former educator and as a parent and not grandparent, I oppose this bill because it removes the autonomy of school districts and families to interpret and apply educational standards and encourages narrow, singular viewpoints that perpetuate racist and discriminatory narratives. I oppose this bill because I want to be able to hire other Ohioans who can think critically and handle complex and conflicting ideas, and this bill would prevent students from being educated to have those skills.

By taking the rights of school districts and families away, this bill imposes a singular State viewpoint over teaching sensitive issues. In so doing, this bill deprives communities of Local Control over their kids' education. Years ago, we moved to Ohio intentionally to live in Shaker Heights, as I know that the community strives to teach all students to think critically and to be able to make valid arguments. The fact that this bill is even up for discussion makes me rethink whether Ohio is a place I want to continue to live. I am concerned about thinking skills and developing talents needed for our changing workforce development needs, as this bill restricts young people's abilities to practice and obtain the skills necessary for job readiness and productive teamwork. This means that competitive talent will be driven away from Ohio at a time when our state desperately needs more great talent here. As a parent and grandparent, I want all children to learn the skills they need to excel, and if this bill passes, they will not learn to analyze, discuss, and debate important topics, and they will not learn to use their agency and voice to advocate for others. I am horrified by the thought that our legislators are considering preventing opportunities for Ohio's children to reckon with historical, social, and intellectual issues and to reconcile, grow, and heal as our children learn to create the solutions that Ohio, our country, and our world need.

As a parent, grandparent and former educator, I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and vote NO on this bill. I also ask you to vote NO on HB 327, and I have submitted a separate though similar letter stating my opposition to that bill as well.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to submit this written testimony.

Respectfully submitted,
Shelly Lazarus
Parent, Grandparent and Watchful Ohio Resident