

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322
Theodore Chao, Associate Professor, The Ohio State University
State and Local Government Committee
09/21/2021

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 Theodore Chao. I am a professor of mathematics education at The Ohio State University. I am also a member of OPAWL, a statewide grassroots community of Asian and Asian American and Pacific Islander Women and non-binary people in Ohio. Our organization is a multi-ethnic, multi-generational community and we represent the diverse diaspora from Asia and the Pacific Islands. I strongly oppose HB 322.

As a global expert in education, I oppose this bill because students deserve to learn accurate and complete American history, which includes but is not limited to Asian American and Pacific Islander American/AAPI history. Additionally, racism experienced by AAPI's is inextricably tied to American history and cannot be ignored or erased. Our children deserve to learn about what factors led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and U.S. involvement in important historical events like the Secret War in Laos, which became the most heavily bombed country in world history.

If this bill passes, a censored and skewed version of history and current events that highlights a select few will be taught in the classroom, completely ignoring and erasing the history of Indigenous, Black, Brown, Asian, Pacific Islander, other communities of color, and the LGBTQIA+ communities. The bills are so vaguely worded in terms of defining what is and is not allowed to be taught in the classroom. The chilling effect of this purposefully vague language is that our teachers will be fearful of approaching topics that are challenging but factual. It is imperative, now more than ever, for our children to learn about these events as they are important parts of our country's foundational history.

First, this bill creates distrust and disharmony among educators, students, and families. No longer will educators feel they have the opportunity to teach the true history of our country, and no longer will students and families feel that the education they get in schools is accurate. This bill allows "fake history" that ignores the true contributions of so many Americans to be taught as the only history in schools.

Second, the legislation is too subjective to lend itself to fair enforcement. The prohibited ideas are vague, as are the behaviors that constitute a violation. In my job preparing and supporting educators, I would not know how to best support them in what sorts of histories or viewpoints are actually problematic. And in terms of enforcement, the bill is vague as to what evidence would substantiate guilt and how to assign responsibility when a discussion veers from the proscribed path.

As a global expert in education and a member of the growing AAPI Ohio population, 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,
Theodore Chao
Associate Professor
The Ohio State University