

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: September 21, 2021

Name: Thomas J. Gibbs

Are you representing: Yourself  Organization

Organization (If Applicable): Athens City School District

Position/Title: Superintendent

Address: 21 Birge Drive, P.O. Box 9

City: Chauncey State: Ohio Zip: 45719

Best Contact Telephone: 740-797-4544 x1201 Email: tgibbs@athenscsd.org

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 and HB 327

Specific Issue: Teaching divisive concepts & employee professional development

Are you testifying as a: Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

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.)

Will your testimony be written, spoken, or both? Written

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Please see the attached Board Resolution.



*Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.*



# Athens City School District

*Every Learner. Every Day.*

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*Superintendent*

**Thomas Gibbs, Ed.D.**

*Director of Curriculum*

**Thomas Parsons**

*Director of Special Services*

**Bob Blackburn**

*Director of Gifted Education*

**Amy Peterson**

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

At the Regular Board Meeting on June 24, 2021, the Board approved the following statement and directed me to provide the statement to members of the State and Local Government Committee regarding opposition to HB 322 and HB 327:

*As members of the Athens City Schools Board we strongly oppose HB 322 and HB 327. This regulation of and intrusion into curriculum, instruction, and training impedes free thought and free speech. These bills support a false or diluted understanding of our history. We ask that our state legislators carefully reconsider this unprecedented interference in public school curriculum.*

*Neither race, racism, gender, sexism, and other concepts outlined in these bills are “divisive”. They are realities deserving of dialogue and understanding unimpeded by Ohio legislative intrusion. Students can have age-appropriate conversations about difficult issues and walk away with a broader understanding of their communities, state, nation, and world. This cannot happen when discussions about race, sex, and gender are not permitted. These bills will impede civil discourse and further the national divide.*

*These topics require thoughtful approaches supported by instruction and training. HB 327 strives to deny institutions the ability to provide training on issues and topics that the state government seeks to declare as “divisive”. These topics however, are the realities that our students face every day. As with many other challenges experienced by our students, these require similar training and support for our teachers and staff as they work to support the needs of every student in Ohio.*

*HB 322 and HB 327 amount to government censorship of public education. As a school board we strongly reject this. We know this to be true; egregious governmental overreaches as outlined in HB 322 and HB 327 will be detrimental to the well-being of our students and to the dialogues so sorely needed.*

Thank you for allowing me to present written testimony on behalf of the Athens City School District Board of Education.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas J. Gibbs, Ed.D.