

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322
Thomas Huntley
State and Local Government Committee
September 21, 2021

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Rep. Kelly, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Thomas Huntley. I am a concerned community member and retired social studies and science teacher living in Bay Village. I strongly oppose HB 322 .

I oppose this bill because...

HB 322 is an example of vague legislation intended to stifle public education and public school educators for reasons other than what the language of the bill pretends to say. The lack of specific examples of the actual existence of CRT in school curriculum supports a view there is a "fear of" rather than a "real existence of" CRT. There is also an implied danger of future "lists of forbidden topics" and some yet to be named oversight committees to meet out punishments for transgressions. There are procedures in place in all of Ohio's school districts for teaching controversial topics. This bill attempts to take sovereignty/local control away from Ohio's Department of Education and Ohio's school boards and the citizens who elected them to make those informed decisions.

Historically, bills like these are similar to the Butler Act of 1925 in Tennessee which prompted the Scopes Trial over the teaching of evolution in public schools. This type of legislation has a broad implication based on a narrow unfounded view. This bill has the potential to label anything a politician or their agents feel threatened by as divisive or CRT. Several of the proponents for this bill mention their students do not attend public school or stress their "Christian values" are threatened. Will these views become the litmus test for divisive material? For example, a student questions a historical event such as the Indian Removal Act of 1830 being discriminatory which leads to a class discussion, That discussion might lead to the racial implications of that act. Both valid and accurate student observations. This example is often a topic in high school social studies classes when teaching about Ohio history and found in many high school social studies textbooks. Would these be banned in the future because a student or parent of a student does not want to hear about such historical facts? If so, this would cause the factual study of Ohio history and/or history in general to be distorted.

Also, I do not see any mention of the statues this bill would create being applicable to Ohio's non-public and parochial schools. Yet another red flag. Are they exempt from curricula scrutiny? Since I can only find republican legislative sponsors and supporters it appears that this bill has strong political overtones and does not really attempt to solve an actual educational problem. It would be my hope the legislators could address an actual educational problem, the full and equitable funding of public education in Ohio, rather than spending time on bills about fictitious issues like HB 322.

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,

Thomas Huntley