

Chairman Scott Wiggam, and members of the State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Alexis Lankford, I work as the Coordinator for Diversity and Inclusion for the College of Education and Human Development but today I am speaking as a concerned citizen. I went to college to be a high school math teacher, but I learned that students need more supporter than their teachers. I changed paths and moved to Ohio to peruse a master's degree to further support students. I am **strongly** opposed to Bill 322 and 327 that are being presented in the House legislature.

Benita Love said, "students no longer learn how to be informed in active citizens, which is key to democracy; instead they learn how to comply and recite affirmations about their grit" (Love, 2019, p. 70). This quote has stuck with me since I read it. Civics engagement should be something that we encourage in our school over any topic. How are we to build a more democratic society without discussing issues that we are facing? Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District (1969) set the standard that students do not lose their rights at the school door. Our students have every right- and responsibility- as citizens to talk about divisive topics.

I've been challenged to do this in my personal and professional life. Each time I feel a little afraid, but after I feel a sense of pride in myself. I was able to communicate my needs, feelings, and position to other people in my community. It made me feel seen and heard by others who care about it. Even if we do not agree, having the conversation makes it worth the effort. This is how we build community across difference. I believe in our teacher's ability in this great state to provide appropriate opportunities for this discourse. We should not be in the position to limit their academic freedom.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote **NO** on this harmful bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

If you have any questions please contact me at alexisthuston@gmail.com

Best,
Alexis Lankford