

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Kelly, and committee members. Thank you for hearing my testimony. For all of the differences between proponents and opponents, we all want what is best for Ohio's children. We all believe in equality.

I have taught special education for the past seven years in Cleveland. My school practices culturally responsive teaching, so I have undergone multiple diversity, equity, and inclusion seminars. At one training, we learned about the effort of some lawmakers and parents in Ohio to suppress the truth about our history and curtail any future teacher trainings. HB 327 claims to be the solution to a widespread problem of teachers indoctrinating students that one race is superior to another and that all white children are to blame for systemic racism. HB 327 is supposed to protect teachers who are not willing to espouse the fact that racism is wrong. We are fortunate that these problems are **not** prevalent in Ohio. Imagine if laws like HB 327 were passed in 1860 or 1960. We would have been teaching students that things were fine, America was great, and there was no reason anything should change. We would not teach about the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963 or the fiery speech Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered there.

In cases where there are misunderstandings or teachers or students feel uncomfortable, resolution only makes sense at the local level. It is also important to realize that being uncomfortable is not the same thing as being threatened or harmed. When we hear about white students, parents or teachers who are uncomfortable with diversity, equity and inclusion, we should be asking the next question. *Why* are you uncomfortable? Can you sit with that discomfort with curiosity and vulnerability? And can you accept the fact that while white people may be uncomfortable discussing racism, People of Color are threatened and harmed because of racism?

I know from my personal experience that I am uncomfortable discussing race and racism. This discomfort partially stems from the fact that I never got to have conversations about race and racism when I was younger. I do not want people to have to wait until they are adults to begin the discussion. Teachers and parents can work together to facilitate age-appropriate engagement with diversity, equity and inclusion topics.

Instead of focusing on invented issues, it is critical that schools in Ohio are funded equitably for the long term, so students have equal opportunities. We need to reconsider the use of high-stakes standardized tests that take so much time away from teaching. Recruitment and preparation of a talented, diverse set of new teachers should be a priority. All teachers should have more training (not less) on how to approach so-called divisive concepts in developmentally and culturally appropriate ways.

Respectfully submitted,

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