

Benjamin Streb

Ohio State & Local Government Committee

H.B. 327 – Opponent Testimony

9/20/21

Chairman Wiggman, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Representative Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony today. My name is Benjamin Streb, I am a proud lifelong Ohio resident, and I am here to say that I strongly oppose HB 327.

House Bill 322 acts as a severe act of restriction from the state towards the concepts taught in an effort to create a more equitable society. This bill utilizes vague language that would impact the ability of state agencies-- ranging from the Department of Education to Public Health-- to provide training on systems of oppression and centering the voices of marginalized people. This is dangerous, considering that Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) face considerable health challenges in these spaces due to systematic racism. Even from COVID-19 statistics alone, we know that Black and Brown people are disproportionately represented in rates of death, under-vaccination, and economic fallout from the pandemic. With such recent data, it is worth noting that racism is a public health crisis-- one that would be difficult to teach with the language in this bill. We need to recognize that the history of how this nation was built-- on the backs of Black and brown people-- does not mean that we should never discuss it. It is evident in publicly published policy, reaching as far back as the early revolutionary years, that white Americans constructed race in an effort to create oppressive hierarchies that have lasted until present day. If we want to dismantle those systems, and champion a truly equitable Ohio, then we need to begin by rejecting the language of this bill.

Racism and gender discrimination kills. Every data point and report on racism and gender discrimination prove this statement true. HB327 is a sore attempt to legislate away the real and true histories and interactions of American society. This false narrative is white supremacy in action, the mythologizing of POC histories, and the erasure the voices of people of color. The far-reaching impact of HB327 is as dangerous as it is divisive. Instead of fighting divisive concepts as it proclaims to do, it will reinforce systematic colorblind racism across the state.

Colorblind racism, first introduced into American society in the post-Civil rights era, only reinforces de facto and systematic racism. Without taking history into account, we cannot right unjust events.

As a white male who has grown up with the fortune of having been a part of diverse circles and neighborhoods, I know firsthand the effects that ignorance, racism, and hatred cause. They are real, they are tangible, and they are pervasive. As a person who has had every advantage in life, from race, gender, to socio-economic standing, I recognize that this is not the case for so many in our country and communities, this is entirely un-American, and I am saddened by that reality. If our goal as a society and your goal as a government body is to truly form a more perfect union, then we must understand the realities that each of us face.

As a lifelong citizen in Ohio, I demand that you do not pass this language. It is not representative of what Ohioans want, it is full of lies, and it has nothing to do with protecting vulnerable people.

Thank you,  
Benjamin Streb