

Witness Letter:

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

Thank you for allowing me to submit my written testimony. My name is Elizabeth Amoriya and I am a retired School Psychologist from Athens County. I am strongly opposed to House bill HB 327, leaving this committee in its present state.

Silencing Honest, and Complete and diverse Truth

Septima Clarke, Educator and Civil Rights Activist:

I believe in the unconditional ability of people to respond when they are told the truth. We need to be taught to study, rather than to believe, to inquire rather than to affirm.

I think the intent of House bill #327 purports to support this above quote but it is not sincere. Instead of working to expand the "truth", it is designed to limit it. Mrs. Clarke wanted teaching to present a whole, honest, complete history from diverse (NOT DIVISIVE) perspectives, placing the past and present day events in the context of the times and including the on-going impact those events had from a variety of perspectives within the citizens of the US. This bill is masquerading as that, while it is really designed to protect the majority white population of the State and the dominant male and heterosexual narrative. It is drawing a line around what can be taught, and by definition is undemocratic, unpatriotic, unconstitutional and in the end, will be indefensible.

We are living in a period of change and our children know this. To deny this is both dishonest and makes them doubt their own perceptions. We know that, following 250 years of enslavement, and 90 years of Jim Crow "separate but equal," Black citizens faced state sanctioned redlining of neighborhoods for 35 years. This bill actually feels like an attempt to draw a redline around what can be taught in the classroom, disrespecting both the intelligence and training of teachers, many with years of experience, as well as the students who are becoming aware of how different perspectives can be. They will eventually see through this attempt and feel cheated and angry if this bill is adopted.

What is divisive to one person, is simply presenting a different/ diverse lived experience to another. The TRUTH can hold this all and as can the children who are exposed to this.

House bill #327 is asking teachers to present a dishonest, incomplete, and outdated form of education that prevents opportunities for growth, reconciliation, and healing. We would be robbing our students of the understanding and empathy necessary to engage across diverse communities and help repair cultural divides.

Systemic racism is the making of laws to support those in the dominant racial group with power and disregard those of another race. Sadly your proposed bill is absolute proof of this reality. You, the dominant racial group are in the act of making a law that would limit what teachers could present in the classroom. Not only are you dictating what and how teachers may present historical and current material and blocking enquiring minds from learning our shared stories of confronting injustice, but you have financial consequences for any district not following this proposed law. It is unconscionable.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote **NO** on this confusing and inconsistent bill that will only silence the teaching of honest and complete education. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter to your committee

Sincerely, Elizabeth Amoriya