

Claire Westerman
Ohio State & Local Government Committee
H.B. 327 – Opponent Testimony
9/21/21

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Claire Westerman, an Ohio resident who wants the best for my state. 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 of our voices. 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 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,
Claire Westerman