

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

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Ohio State & Local Government Committee
H.B. 327 – Opponent Testimony
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Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Donna Long and I am the Director of Advocacy and Outreach for YWCA Dayton. YWCA is a member of the Ohio Council of YWCAs, a coalition of 14 sister YWs across the state. We strongly oppose House Bill 327.

YWCA Dayton is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. We lead the way for women to become the driving force behind their own success in a community free of racial and economic barriers because every woman within our reach deserves to be safe, supported, and empowered to unleash her full potential.

These core components of our mission lead to our opposition of HB 327. Without the foundation of knowledge necessary to combat racism and gender discrimination, Ohio's children and state employees will be ill-equipped to combat issues impacted by systematic racism. Women and girls of color specifically are more likely to experience heightened discrimination against them; passing this legislation will also codify the disempowering of women and girls of color, whose experiences and stories will be legislated out of curriculum and state policies that is *not* representative of them in the first place.

A priority of YWCA is to educate and empower our communities. In service of that goal, we take on discussion around controversial but necessary elements of American society, ranging from Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) services to direct services in housing and childcare. All such programs demand from us an understanding of the intersections of race, gender, and class. We echo the educational concerns discussed in our testimony on HB 322. This bill also would negatively impact the ability of students, teachers, and communities to learn from one another and grow in their understanding. In addition, this bill utilizes vague language that would impact the ability of state agencies to examine biases and integrate a variety of experiences and needs when making decisions.

This is dangerous, considering that Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) face considerable challenges in these spaces due to systematic racism. People do not have to be racist to make choices that fuel racism in institutions. People who have racial biases (even

unconscious ones) cannot create unbiased systems and laws. We must allow state agencies to examine where issues exist and what the consequences of biases can mean for communities of color in order to do better.

It is important to acknowledge that despite our individual best efforts, we do not know the world from the perspective of others. This self-reflection can serve to better and improve ourselves for a better Ohio, but HB 327 would directly impact the ability of state agencies and schools to do so. For this reason, we repeat our opposition to the passage.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify on HB 327. I would be happy to answer any questions you have.