

Opponent Testimony for Sub House Bill 327
Elisabeth Plumlee-Watson, concerned citizen
State and Local Government Committee
September 22, 2021

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Representative Kelly, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today.

My name is Elisabeth Plumlee-Watson, and I strongly oppose HB 322 and HB 327 as attempts to hide the truths of history--and the work of innovative inquiry--from classrooms across Ohio. I am especially concerned by the way that Sun HB 327 would threaten the fiscal safety of my local school district and the often already-precarious livelihoods of teachers daring to teach the truth to students in my community.

Professionally, I am a bookseller at Loganberry Books in Shaker Heights, OH. Every week, I meet and work with Ohioans who are seeking the truths of history--things they wish they had learned in school, but which their teachers were either ignorant of or intimidated out of teaching--though previous generations of teachers didn't even have such threatening bills as HB 327 to contend with.

Last week, I helped an 82-year-old woman--an alumna of the same Ohio school as I--choose books about the Holocaust and anti-Black housing discrimination of the 20th century. "These things were going on while I was in school," she said. "But my teachers never talked about them, and my parents refused to. Sixty years later, I'm still making up for lost time." We talked about how sometimes the most recent history is the hardest to face; and how it can be the most important. We talked about how relatively privileged she is to have the time and money to try to cobble together her own education, and how much she could have done earlier in her life if she'd learned this difficult, "divisive" history in school.

I myself am the descendant of enslavers and the beneficiary of racist legislation and custom enacted for decades after slavery officially ended. This information does not make me feel good. *It is not history's job to make me feel good.* What knowledge of history CAN do--and HAS done--is clarify how I can work for a more just future.

I want future generations of Ohio students to have even MORE access to the truths of history than I did--not less.

I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and Sub HB 327 and vote NO on these dangerous bills.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any additional questions or provide input as needed.

Respectfully submitted,
Elisabeth Plumlee-Watson