

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322
Elizabeth O'Brochta, retired educator
State and Local Government Committee

Chairman Wiggam, 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 Elizabeth O'Brochta. As a retired elementary educator, I strongly oppose HB 322.

As a retired educator who taught for 34 years in Ohio, I oppose this bill because a strong sense of community is essential for optimum learning. While teaching, I was committed to making our classroom a haven where everyone was valued, and differences were celebrated and seen as an asset to our learning environment. Engagement from everyone was necessary to reach optimum learning. I know that I am not alone in these values, and many educators in our state foster this learning environment.

Some of our best learning moments were centered around current events. For example, I was teaching fourth grade the day the planes crashed into the World Trade Center. I will never forget that day and the days that followed. I was responsible for telling 25 nine and ten-year-olds why they were not walking home alone that day and also to give a brief account of what had happened.

The next day we learned that one of my student's uncles was in a firefight in NYC, and he lost 12 team members that day. So a service-learning project came from children realizing that twenty-one children lost a parent on that day, and that group of 4th graders raised over \$4000.00 for the families of the fallen firefighters.

Our honest discussions in the days that followed were the realization that we couldn't easily target a religion or nationality as the "enemy." We had friends and knew people that practiced the Muslim faith. The focus went from helping to healing. Through guest speakers and various readings, we learned about terrorism, Muslim culture, and, more importantly, patriotism. I am still in contact with those students(now 20 years later), and they reference that study as one of the most meaningful during their school years.

With the passing of House Bill 322, as an educator, I would be unable to tap into resources or address the trauma of events such as 9/11. In addition, I would not be able to carry on student-led discussions, debates, or analyses of a controversial topic- even if it is brought to the class by the students.

As a concerned citizen and retired educator, I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and vote NO on this bill.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth O'Brochta
Retired Educator

