

Written Opponent Testimony on HB 327
House State and Local Government Committee
September 22, 2021
Submitted by Ellen Katz, President & CEO
Greater Cincinnati Foundation

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the Senate State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written opponent testimony on House Bill 327.

My name is Ellen Katz and I am the President & CEO at Greater Cincinnati Foundation, the community foundation whose mission is to support the creation of a more vibrant Greater Cincinnati for everyone — now, and for generations to come. As such, I am writing to express my opposition to this bill.

Our community has long struggled with disparities in outcomes by race for both its students and its adults. As a community foundation, we believe that to address our communities' toughest challenges we must be willing to discuss and name the root causes of the issues we are facing. For this reason, we have offered the Racial Equity Matters series since 2019, engaging over 2,300 community members in conversations around race and equity, which has been attended and deeply appreciated by educators across the K-12 and higher education space as well as our public officials.

In 2018, the All-Cincinnati Report estimated that if we had eliminated our racial disparities in income in 2014, the Cincinnati metro would have had an additional \$9.9 billion in GDP.¹ Part of closing that gap and supporting the shared prosperity of our region involves ensuring that our institutions provide a level playing field for all students. HB327 would discourage administrators, educators, and our public institutions from engaging with the ways in which biases in our systems lead to systemic differences in our outcomes. By preventing access to bias training, this bill would leave systemic inequities to continue creating unequal outcomes for future generations.

¹ Crowder JA, 2018. All-In Cincinnati: Equity is the Path to Inclusive Prosperity Report

This bill would also push educators to avoid approaches that help our students succeed and thrive. Research has shown that the implementation of an ethnic studies curriculum with culturally relevant pedagogy can improve student attendance, credits earned, and GPA and reduce students' likelihood of dropping out of school.² For example, Cincinnati Public Schools recently implemented a new African American history curriculum. As a community, we must continue to explore and invest in evidence-based programs and supports that improve academic outcomes. HB327 would threaten the loss of academic credit for, or access to, the very research-based courses and teaching approaches that inspire students and engage them to succeed.

HB327's stiff penalties and broad definition of divisive concepts and application beyond our K-12 system and into higher education and our political subdivisions would amplify these negative impacts and limit our communities' abilities to engage in important dialogue and analysis as they respond to urgent community needs.

In order to support our community's growth and future prosperity, we cannot run from issues or history of racism and discrimination in our country. Only by confronting them head on can we enable young Ohioans to build the 21st-century skills needed to support their success in the future. Our children, our communities, and our state will be better for it.

For the reasons listed above, the Greater Cincinnati Foundation encourages you to vote no on House Bill 322.

Thank you again for this opportunity to submit written testimony. Feel free to contact me with questions or for additional information.

² Dee TS, Penner EK. The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence From an Ethnic Studies Curriculum. *American Educational Research Journal*. 2017;54(1):127-166. doi:10.3102/0002831216677002