



HOUSE STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE – Opponent Testimony, HB  
327, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2021

Chairman Wiggman, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and for the opportunity to provide testimony.

My name is Jeff Dillon, and I am the Ohio Legislative Director for Americans for Prosperity (AFP), one of the state's largest grassroots organizations focused on long-term solutions to our country's biggest problems. I urge you to oppose House Bill 327, a bill which would prohibit the teaching of, advocating for, or promoting of "divisive concepts".

During the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly, AFP – Ohio strongly supported SB 40, the Forming Open and Robust University Minds Act, or FORUM, which was ultimately enacted. We supported FORUM because we recognize that college campuses provide a unique opportunity for students to express their views, have their arguments challenged in a respectful manner, and understand the mutual benefit of constructive debate with those with whom they disagree.

FORUM abolished speech zones and speech codes on campuses, recognizing that instead of shutting out ideas and speakers, universities should facilitate confronting uncomfortable ideas. We believe in and will continue to advocate for Justice Brandeis' famed maxim that the answer to bad speech is more speech.

The same principles lead AFP to oppose HB 327. While we certainly understand there are concerns surrounding CRT and its implementation in some academic settings, but HB 327 is not the answer. HB 327 is overly broad, vague, and stands in opposition to the principles of free speech and academic freedom.

HB 327 bans ideas labeled as "divisive concepts" from college campuses. Among the most troubling parts of the bill is the provision that would "ensure that divisive concepts are not

taught, advocated, acted upon, or promoted by the agency, the agency's employees during work hours." That provision would ban professors from discussing these topics amongst themselves in the faculty lounge or at lunch.

It's not just the students on our campuses that benefit from this robust debate, it's all of us. Today's college students are tomorrow's members of this committee, our judges, our teachers, and our community leaders. By not merely teaching them about our freedoms, but also by ensuring their opportunity to exercise those freedoms, our universities will create future leaders of our state who are open to dialogue and debate.

SB 40 helped to make Ohio a national leader in promoting free speech on campus. For the above reasons, we ask you to ensure Ohio remains that national leader of free expression on campus, and accordingly oppose HB 327 with your vote.

Chairman Wiggam, thank you again for the opportunity to offer testimony today, and I'm happy to do my best to answer any questions the committee might have.

*Americans for Prosperity (AFP) exists to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies and goals of a free society at the local, state, and federal level, helping every American live their dream – especially the least fortunate. AFP has more than 3.2 million activists across the nation, a local infrastructure that includes 36 state chapters, and has received financial support from more than 100,000 Americans in all 50 states. For more information, visit [www.AmericansForProsperity.org](http://www.AmericansForProsperity.org).*