

Opponent Testimony on HB 322 / HB 327
Ohio House State and Local Government Committee
September 17, 2021

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jennifer Willging. I am an associate professor of French language, literature and culture at The Ohio State University.

As an educator, I strongly oppose HB 322 / 327, which constitute nothing less backward and dangerous than censorship. These are the kinds of laws we have seen in the past and still see today in authoritarian regimes such as Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, communist China, and the list goes on. A free society, one in which at least most Americans agree they want to live, is a society in which ideas of all kinds can be discussed and where there is never just one account of historical events. History books are written by human beings at specific times, in specific contexts, for specific purposes, and therefore how they represent the past evolves over time. Our understanding of historical events tends to become more nuanced and, I would argue, more accurate in the aggregate over time, as more historians conduct more research and approach historical events from a widening array of points of view. Pretending that there is one version of any historical event or phenomenon is naïve at best, tyrannical at worst. I entreat you to place yourselves on the forward-looking side of history when it comes time to vote on these bills, which I would call silly if they did not pose such a serious threat to our democracy and to our mission (mine as an educator, yours as public servants) to help Ohio's young people become educated, ethical, empathetic, and responsible citizens.

I urge you to vote NO on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any additional questions or provide input as needed.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Willging