

Opponent Testimony on HB 327

Ohio House State and Local Government Committee

September 21, 2021

Chair Wiggam, Vice-Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and committee members, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Jessica Leveto, Ph.D. I am an Associate Professor of Sociology, and I have studied and taught sociology for over two decades. I am an Ohio Voter from Ashtabula, Ohio, and I strongly oppose HB 327.

As a mother, professor, and engaged community member, I strongly oppose this bill because it silences the resilience, strength, and perseverance of my students, friends, and family. This bill prevents pathways to historical, social, and intellectual reconciliations, growth, and healing and will set Ohio students back generations in an increasingly diverse society.

This legislation proclaims to stop the “*creation of victims*”; however, it fails to recognize the magnitude of the resilience and strength obtained when people are taught an honest, accurate history. Overcoming hardships and the pursuit of upward mobility are cornerstones to our society – we pride ourselves on grit, a strong work ethic, and champion folks when they overcome challenges. How dare the state legislature attempt to sanitize or dilute the reality of our complex, diverse histories! To move beyond inequities, we must first take account of inequity – there is no other way.

HB 327 leaves students, communities, and Ohio ill-equipped to thrive in a diverse, globally connected world. I have witnessed how powerful it can be for all students (regardless of race) to learn of the systemic inequities inherent in our system (including, but not limited to race) and consider historical atrocities that continue to have lasting consequences today.

Teaching an honest, accurate, critical history has empowered my students to achieve more, work harder and engage more effectively in a multiracial, multiethnic, diverse world.

I implore you to trust teachers and trust students. Do not underestimate the power of fortitude, resilience, and the tenacity of educators and students. Do not take a very misguided, misunderstanding of systemic inequity and assume it creates victims while my experience (and empirical evidence) has shown honesty in education **empowers** survivors. We may all need to get a little uncomfortable for us to move forward to a better future for all.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica A. Leveto, Ph.D.