

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

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Are you representing: Yourself  Organization

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Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): \_\_\_\_\_

Specific Issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you testifying as a: Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? Yes  No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

Will your testimony be written, spoken, or both? \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

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**Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322 (and Sub House Bill 327)**  
**Margaret C. Flinn, Associate Professor of French and of Film Studies, The Ohio State**  
**University; Parent, Columbus City Schools**  
**State and Local Government Committee**  
**20 September 2021**

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 Margaret Flinn. I am currently an Associate Professor at the Ohio State University and have taught in U.S. higher education since 1999, in the Big 10 since 2004. I am also the parent of a middle schooler in Columbus City Schools. I strongly oppose House Bill 322 and House Sub Bill 327 because House Sub Bill 327 disregards academic freedom and both HB 322 and Sub Bill 327 limit teachers' ability to teach complete and accurate history as set forth in the curricula of their school districts. Both bills are thus fundamentally hostile to the project of educating Ohio citizens.

Since I joined the faculty at Ohio State in 2012, I have been very proud of our institutional motto: Education for Citizenship. In my field of film and media studies, this means that I lead classroom discussions on many fraught historical and contemporary issues. My job is to provide students with the established knowledge of my field. But as I am faculty member at a research institution, my students also participate in the creation of knowledge through dialogue with my own on-going research. In seminars and large lecture courses I regularly challenge students to think actively and originally about social and cultural problems as they are represented in film, television, and literature, to look deeply into the way that audio-visual narratives construct realities and position themselves to impact both our emotional experience

and intellectual understanding of the world. These are complicated, complex conversations that OSU students engage in with nuance, insight, and enthusiasm, and classrooms are the spaces where they practice the skills that they will need as citizens. My primary research and teaching areas is the French and Francophone world, but whether or not I deliberately set up comparative analysis with US history or current events, that is the common experience and shared knowledge base that the majority of my students bring to my classroom. If my facilitation of these challenging conversations appears to any student to be biased or insensitive, to be discriminatory or harassing, they have multiple avenues of grievance open to them, from Student Evaluation of Instruction (which are part of my annual departmental review and college promotion dossier materials) through to the filing of a simple complaint form with Ohio State's Office of Institutional Equity. Students do not need this government overreach chilling the atmosphere of free inquiry and academic freedom that is the hallmark of higher education in this country.

Moreover, K-12 students need to be prepared both to be active citizens and for the possibility of higher education. It is my hope that my son's horizons will be broad and his knowledge of the world deep: his public school education is a crucial portal to his ability to meaningfully engage in civil society. Please trust his teachers to do that work of educating him to be a citizen.

As an educator and a concerned parent, I urge you to vote NO on these damaging bills. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,

Margaret C. Flinn, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, The Ohio State University