

Matthew S. Hollstein, PhD testimony in opposition to HB 327

Chair Wiggam, Vice-Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony related to HB 327. My name is Dr. Matthew Hollstein and I would like to start by noting that I am opposed to this legislation. I would like to stress that I am submitting this testimony as an educator and private citizen, and I am in no way representing my employer or any other organization. I believe HB 327 sets a precedent in education which will cause irrevocable damage to current and future students as well as in their lives as future citizens. I would like to give you a little bit of my background and credentials. I spent 8 years teaching in K-12 social studies and the last 6 teaching in higher education at Kent State University. My career in education has been in service to the students of Ohio to either help them become active, informed, and participatory citizens or helping prepare future teachers who will prepare students in social studies. I would like to reiterate that I am strongly opposed to HB 327.

Upon reading and researching HB 327 I believe this bill will cause significant harm to the social studies students and teachers of Ohio. This bill significantly limits classroom teachers and teacher educators' ability to fully prepare students and student teachers in social studies. For those students and teachers in K-12 settings, parts of the existing and recently adopted Ohio state social studies standards could not be taught. Specifically, standards in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8th grade as well as numerous standards in grades K-4 and 9-12. These standards would need to be immediately re-written creating a further crisis for teachers, teacher educators, and administrators. In higher education, teacher educators would be significantly hampered in their ability to adequately prepare future teachers on topics which are vital to what social studies teachers do in the classroom and in society. Examples include addressing all facets of citizenship and the ability to understand, unpack, and respond to those events and issues which may not be congruent with their own.

One of the hallmarks of a strong democracy is the space and ability for citizens to engage in civil discourse and disagreement. However, if this bill were to pass in its current form, that would be made impossible. There have been times when my beliefs and ideas conflicted with my students. However, I did not stifle students' thoughts and voices rather I encouraged a healthy dialogue around civil disagreement. I use the term dialogue purposefully because I have taught while in K-12 and do teach in higher education that there are three primary levels in disagreement, and each has a different goal. Arguing, debate, and dialogue. The first two, argument and debate both seek to win for their side while dialogue seeks to understand all sides. I believe this bill will severely limit my ability to fully prepare future social studies teachers and will subsequently detrimentally impact a generation of future citizens in Ohio.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this harmful legislation. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I will now take any questions you may have.

