

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: September 20, 2021

Name: Richard Doringo

Are you representing: Yourself  Organization

Organization (If Applicable):

Position/Title: High School Teacher

Address: 38643 Courtland Dr.

City: Willoughby State: OH Zip: 44094

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes  No

## Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 327

Specific Issue: The language and impact of the bill on Ohio schools.

Are you testifying as a: Proponent  Opponent  Interested Party

Are you testifying: In-Person  Written-Only

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.)

How much time will your testimony require?

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

September 20, 2021

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair John, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Richard Doringo and I am a high school history and social studies teacher with 24 years of experience in Northeast Ohio schools. I am strongly opposed to House bill HB 327, which would prevent Ohio students from receiving an honest, accurate education.

I would like to offer written testimony specifically about **HB 327**. My greatest concern about HB 327 is the vague language of “divisive context” and who has the power to apply that definition to the materials or programs used in our schools.

The very language of HB 327 opens the gates to the political control of our schools from the state legislature. The “definitions” given to “divisive content” are too vague and could possibly be applied to areas of study in our secondary schools and universities that are staples of sound educational practice. It implies that the teaching of race or gender or ethnic studies is somehow designed to tear people and communities apart when the exact opposite is true. Many of the programs that highlight the history of particular people or groups are designed to highlight the contributions made by those groups as part of the American fabric, not to distant them from our society or values.

I am especially concerned that the vagueness of “divisive content” and how it might be applied will be damaging to diversity programs that have existed in Ohio public and independent schools for decades. These types of programs, which I have been involved with for most of my career, are uplifting and bring people from various backgrounds together. They do not set one group against another, but foster unity and a shared responsibility through empathy and citizenship. These programs can easily become targets under this new legislation despite the decades-long records of their successes.

Lastly, I fear that the ultimate decision of curriculum and teaching content is being taken out of the hands of our schools and into the hands of politicians in the legislature. I find it especially egregious that the determination of “divisive content” can impact the funding of our schools. The decisions about schools’ curriculum should be kept in the hands of professional educators and administrators who have the responsibility to protect the best interest of our students in making them well-rounded thinkers, learners and citizens. In spite of the language of this bill, we educators take our responsibility as teachers and nurturers of our students very seriously and want to do our best to prepare them for the world ahead.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote **NO** on HB 327. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.