

**Opponent Testimony for House Bill 327**  
**Dr. Stacey Nofziger, Associate Professor, University of Akron**  
**State and Local Government Committee**  
**September 19, 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 Stacey Nofziger. I am a professor and a parent of a fourth grader. I strongly oppose HB 327.

Division in our country is exacerbated when communication about any topic is silenced. We need students to learn how to listen to others and respect differences in opinion. In fact, according to the National Association of Colleges and Employers<sup>i</sup>, the most important skill for the modern workforce is working in teams, which includes appreciating diverse viewpoints and managing conflict. A second top skill sought by employers is critical thinking, which means not only understanding data, but being aware of personal biases that can impact interpretation of facts and the ability to recognize diverse experiences in forming arguments.

One of the primary goals of education is to teach students to think critically about a wide range of issues. Developing critical thinking skills requires teachers to encourage students to explore topics from multiple perspectives, weigh competing evidence, analyze data, and draw supported conclusions. Therefore, classrooms must be a safe space where teachers can introduce difficult issues and current events that our students feel strongly about. It is the job of the teacher to help students learn to listen to each other and work together with people who may have views that differ from their own. This process needs to start at very young ages, with studies finding that children as young as 3 and 4-years old can reap long-term benefits from directed activities by teachers that encourage teamwork and build critical thinking<sup>ii</sup>.

These bills would strangle our teachers, threatening them with the loss of their jobs, funding for their schools and thus tremendous losses for the students they care so much about, and even the risk of being subjected to frivolous civil law suits. These bills will rob our students of extremely important classroom experiences and create a system where they are disadvantaged when they attempt to succeed in the workforce. It will create hostility, fear, and frustration in the classroom, rather than inclusion and acceptance.

As someone who wants the best both for my students and for my son, I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 327 and vote NO on this bill.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any additional questions.

Respectfully submitted,  
Stacey Nofziger  
Associate Professor, Department of Sociology  
University of Akron

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.nacweb.org/talent-acquisition/candidate-selection/the-attributes-employers-look-for-in-students-resumes/>

<sup>ii</sup> See for example:

Heyman, G. D. (2008). Children's critical thinking when learning from others. *Current directions in psychological science*, 17(5), 344-347.

Hudgins, B. B., & Edelman, S. (1986). Teaching critical thinking skills to fourth and fifth graders through teacher-led small-group discussions. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 333-342.

Polat, Ö., & Aydın, E. (2020). The effect of mind mapping on young children's critical thinking skills. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 38, 100743.