

September 21, 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 Tricia Steiner. I am a white mother of two freshman students, one in high school and one in college. I previously served on my local School Board in Pennsylvania prior to our recent move to Ohio, where both of my children now attend school. I am strongly opposed to House bills HB 322 and HB 327, which would prevent Ohio students from receiving an honest, accurate education.

As a parent and recent school board member advocating for equity and belonging, I have been on the front lines of inclusion for the last several years, which has intensified more recently this past year due to the coordinated campaign of Christopher Rufo and the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, as well as other Koch-funded entities such as the Heritage Foundation and the American Legislative Exchange Council, as explained in the articles linked below from Brookings, the Washington Post, and The Nation.

The documented co-opting of Critical Race Theory to ban the learning and discussion of structural racism and sexism in America's history and the effectual through lines that remain today have been orchestrated not for the betterment and well-being of our children, nor to create a better-informed citizenry, but to deliberately misrepresent, mislead, and manipulate our neighborhood communities. These bad-faith arguments create misunderstandings, irrational fears, and make our schools less safe for the millions of children who are already most vulnerable and who struggle to learn in increasingly hostile environments where they are constantly made to feel as if they do not belong. Such extreme censorship of honest conversations about current events and lived experiences without allowing the understanding for historical context not only has a severe chilling effect on the autonomy of our teachers and the promotion of democratic values in a pluralistic society, but more importantly leaves our students fundamentally underprepared to engage as national and global citizens in a multiracial, multiethnic world.

Contrary to the manufactured outcry, a truthful history does not seek to tell white children they are evil or that they are to be blamed and shamed for the sins of the past. Rather, it provides

a crucial understanding of the collective laws and systems responsible for the inequities that are so pervasive and evident today, inescapable in the lives of all our children. An understanding of history and policies that have hurt not only our Black, brown, Asian, and Indigenous populations, but that have had detrimental damaging effects on white people too, as outlined in detail in books such as 'The Sum of Us' by Heather McGhee, and 'Dying of Whiteness' by Jonathan Metzl. We do not live in a segregated world and thus, must not teach a segregated history or discuss only segregated current events. We must stop pretending to live in a post-racial, color-blind, policy neutral society when the overwhelming data and outcomes of racial disparity not only in our larger society, but also in each one of our schools, stubbornly remain. We must face our past and learn from it before we can progress toward a peaceful future where we can all just be.

Any equity measures made by locally controlled school districts to incorporate more nuanced, comprehensive, and inclusive curriculum and staff trainings are desperately needed to help better serve the humanitarian needs of all our kids. Before kids can learn effectively, they must have their basic needs met which include a sense of safety, belonging, connection, and love. These efforts conflated with misunderstandings related to bills HB 322 and HB 327 will cause a cascade of undue harms and extend already existing barriers to learning and safety.

Only by having honest conversations with truthful historical accounts can we move past this place of fear and move toward a collective place of healing and unity.

I ask you to please consider my testimony and vote **NO** on these extremely harmful and truth-censoring bills. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

*Tricia Steiner*

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[Why are states banning critical race theory? \(brookings.edu\)](https://www.brookings.edu/blog/why-are-states-banning-critical-race-theory/2021/05/12/)

[Activist Christopher Rufo fuels GOP's critical race theory fight - The Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2021/05/12/activist-christopher-rufo-fuels-gop-critical-race-theory-fight/)

[The panic over critical race theory is an attempt to whitewash U.S. history - The Washington Post](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2021/05/12/the-panic-over-critical-race-theory-is-an-attempt-to-whitewash-u.s.-history/)

[The Radical Capitalist Behind the Critical Race Theory Furor | The Nation](https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/critical-race-theory-furor/)