

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chairwoman John, Ranking Member Representative Kelly, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee,

My name is Valerie Lee. I am a retired School Psychologist. Based on my experiences working in educational settings for over 30 years, I strongly oppose HB 327.

My husband grew up in the south as a poorly educated, economically disadvantaged, African American child. He would labor in the fields at an early age because educating people of color was not a priority in the State of Florida. If I walked you through his journey to get a rudimentary education that led him to seek higher education, this testimony would be much too lengthy to hold your interest. Allow me to fast forward to his arrival at Howard University, one of many historically black colleges and universities, where he learned American history and how he fit into that history. That history was not always pretty, but it paved the way for him to become a productive citizen who has always strived to make this country a more perfect union.

My job as a school psychologist often put me into classrooms to observe students and teaching styles that might serve as an impediment to student learning. Through those countless observations, I developed a real appreciation for teachers who were able to move outside of the textbook and bring the subject matter to life. The students were actively engaged with the teacher serving the role as a conductor of an orchestral masterpiece. HB 327 would take us back to the rote teaching and learning model it took us decades to abandon. The old school approach leaned heavily on censorship and indoctrination. They would find ways to silence any demonstration of critical thinking skills. Do we really want to bring into our education system a law that makes you as a student, or your teacher who encouraged your active learning to be judged as “divisive?” It also begs the question as to whom would make that judgement or what criteria would be used.

In this time of a polarized society with something as minor as mask wearing can be politicized, why would we introduce a vaguely worded, inciteful piece of legislation that serves no purpose in creating a healthy learning environment. We yearn for lawmakers who work to write and pass legislation that serves the common good, not a political base.

Respectfully Submitted,

Valerie Lee

21 September 2021