

Hello and good afternoon. My name is Anagha Velamakanni, and I am a 4th year undergraduate student at The Ohio State University. I'm here today to convey to you all my opposition towards HB 327 and HB 322. I choose to direct most of my attention in this testimony to HB 327, although I strongly believe both these bills should be opposed. House Bill 327 is pending legislation that prohibits the teaching, instructing, promoting, and advocating of "Divisive Concepts" in Pre-K-12, higher education, and political subdivisions. If this bill were to pass and be enacted, key parts of education within our system would be eradicated. This is counterproductive, as it is well known that the American education system, especially within some states, is not top-tier. Violators of this bill would have to endure penalties such as suspension, revocation of license, withholding of up to 100% of state funding, and even a denial of tenure and employment. Is this not censorship? To deny children of our key aspects of American history and why this country is shaped the way it is? And if people decide to teach these critical aspects anyway, they get punished for it. This bill inherently wants to keep students blind-sided to important sociological concepts that shaped our history, and for what? What does this bill hope to achieve? Why are legislators backing this obviously biased piece of writing? Once again, I ask: Is this not censorship? Last time I checked, America still had the first amendment, the right to free speech if it does not entice violence. How is teaching kids how and why racial dynamics became salient in our society enticing violence? I must mention, this bill doesn't only target children, it targets Higher Education Institutions as well. This bill specifically targets school districts, STEM schools, community schools, District Schools, Higher Ed. Institutions, Political Subdivisions, and Nonpublic School Enrolling Students Using a State Scholarship Program. This bill also encourages civil action against public schools. It baffles me that there isn't more opposition towards this bill, and quite frankly it baffles me that this bill was even introduced in the first place. It prohibits awarding credit that counts toward high school graduation for a course that includes "prohibited divisive concepts", might I add that these "prohibited divisive concepts" are courses such as US History, African-American History, and Human Rights and Conflict. My understanding from all of this is that this bill allows for American education to be even more white-washed than it already is. It's honestly very infuriating and frustrating as a POC to have your own history erased from the education system. I am in strong opposition to these bills, they have no place here in Ohio. Do better. Listen to your community, listen to your people. Children and students are the future, they will lead this country to bigger and better strides. Don't ruin the great things they can bring to our society by limiting their holistic education.