Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322

Sarah Sweeney, MD
State and Local Government Committee
9/21/2021

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Sarah Sweeney. I am a community member and family physician in Cuyahoga County. I strongly oppose HB 322.

I oppose this bill because I believe it is in the best interest of Ohio and our nation to learn and speak openly and teach our children to think critically regarding the history of Ohio and America's past and present particularly related to slavery, Jim Crow, segregation and ongoing racial inequalities that continue to exist in this country. By prohibiting schools and school boards from teaching and discussing history and current events we are holding our children back and damaging the integrity of our schools. This bill promotes censorship and a narrow vision of patriotism that is bigoted and narrow.

Teaching children and educators about the ways that segregation (for example redlining) has impacted our communities is not wrong or causing harm to white students. Quite frankly, openly teaching children about harms of the recent past even if their own communities are implicated in the harm helps children to develop a strong moral compass and to understand that moving towards a more equal and just Ohio requires us to think and look critically at the past so we can do better. Learning about the past even if it is hard is not divisive, it's life. For example, decades ago my own grandfather did not vote to have women included in the country club he was part of. Over time he changed this view. Learning this about him did not make me hate my grandfather or family. It helped me to see that we must be critical of the ways the rights and freedoms of different groups are restricted and limited and the ways we can do better moving forward. This is essential to education.

I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and vote NO on this bill.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to testify.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah Sweeney, MD