

Testimony on Sub House Bill 327

From: Dr. Colette Dollarhide, Professor and Program Coordinator of Counselor
Education, The Ohio State University
To: State and Local Government Committee
Date 6/21/2021

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

Thank you for allowing me to provide this strenuous objection to HB 322 and Sub HB 327. My name is Dr. Colette Dollarhide, and I have been a counselor for 33 years and a professor of counseling for 28 years. I have also just completed a term as the President of the national association of Counselors for Social Justice, because of the strong connection between fair treatment by society at large and mental health. With the dramatic increase in violent crime in the past year, the issue of mental health and feeling a part of society is evident in our national and local news, and is evident in findings from many research studies into crime, social belonging, and education. As a professor of counseling, I train new professionals to recognize and address the issues of fairness and connection to society for clients in the schools and clinical settings in which they are employed. As a result of my clinical experience, training experience, and mental health research experience, I **strongly oppose** House Bill 322 and House Sub Bill 327.

In my clinical and educational experience, I oppose these bills for multiple reasons. First, these bills represent the dangerous censorship of ideas – the primary purpose of education! Members of the Primary and Secondary Education Committee, whose membership includes 10 persons with experience in education in some form, would not support these bills because they know that education must be the clearinghouse for ideas in a free nation. This is the *foundation of democracy*; ideas are not a commodity for sale to the highest bidder or to any political party to further its power or control over the democratic process.

Second, these two bills censor and restrict honest education and accountability of our nation's past, present, and future, dictating what is taught and how it is taught. Educators from kindergarten to universities must be able to teach social and emotional learning skills, involving skills in how to get along with others who do not look like

you. Healthy respect for diverse others, awareness of one's biases and prejudices, and clear skills for interacting with all persons in life are crucial skills needed by all employees in Ohio. These bills prevent such discussions in schools, and severely polices what and how educators are allowed teach this content.

Third, Sub HB 327 specifically removes free speech and academic freedom from higher education, where free ideas MUST be promoted. It threatens and intimidates educators into compliance by removing up to 100% of state funding and revoking education licensure for violations of the bill. This is devastating for universities, colleges, and school districts that are already dangerously underfunded and under-resourced, specially after COVID-19.

Finally, leading and trusted statewide education agencies, practitioners, and communities directly oppose the bills. The Ohio Federation of Teachers, the Ohio Education Association, and leaders of Ohio Counselors for Social Justice are all opposed to these bills and the attempts to undermine efforts to recognize the trauma that oppressed persons live with on a daily basis. These oppressed persons include the poor; persons who identify with the LGBTQI community; women; persons from Black, Brown, and Native communities; persons who live with physical or mental conditions that threaten their quality of life; new Americans; and many, many more.

As a counselor, counselor educator, and tireless advocate for oppressed persons for the past 30+ years, I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and Sub HB 327 and vote NO on these dangerous bills.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to provide this perspective. I would be happy to answer any additional questions or provide input as needed. You may reach me at dollarhide.1@osu.edu or 614-769-4028.

Respectfully submitted,

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