

Opponent Testimony for House Bill 322 and 327

Owen Ganor, Student, Rocky River High School, Rocky River, Ohio

State and Local Government Committee

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Owen Ganor. I am a student at Rocky River High School and a member of the S.P.E.A.K. Coalition. That stands for Students Promoting Equity and Knowledge. I strongly oppose both HB 322 and 327.

As a student, I oppose these bills because they would harm teachers, students, and Ohio in general.

First and foremost, these bills target conduct that is not happening. Do you think that teachers are standing up in front of their classes saying that one race or sex is inherently better than the other? Or that the moral character of one race or sex is better than another? Or, what I think is the real driver here, that white, male students should feel guilty or ashamed in their present lives because of something that happened historically? As a white, male student, I can say unequivocally that this is NOT happening. Of course, it is not. Just as critical race theory is NOT being taught in K-12 education.

Before moving forward, I challenge you to provide this evidence because otherwise, you are legislating an unfounded claim.

While the targeted conduct is NOT happening in schools, what is most likely to happen if these bills pass, is a severe chilling or silencing effect on thought and discussion within a classroom. How are we as students to understand the present-day context of current events if we cannot learn about the historical backdrop to those events because someone might feel uncomfortable about it? We, the students of Ohio, are stronger than that. I implore you to trust our teachers to teach difficult history in compassionate and constructive ways. Let us not send Ohio students out into the world without the ability to think critically about current events or our nations history.

Failing to discuss current events would put me and every other student at a profound disadvantage relative to our peers, nationally and globally. Discussing current events in my history classes has given me a lens through which to examine those events and issues in a way to form my own opinion. It has given me the ability to speak on many issues and the reason I am able to speak here today.

Current events don't happen in vacuum. They happen with a historical buildup, sometimes over hundreds of years. Who better than our teachers to help us understand that historical context, to help us understand what happened and why? It is so important for us to be able to have open and honest discussions in class, no matter the varying opinions of teachers and students. Ohio students need a baseline knowledge of a factual, collective history to be able to have and argue for their opinions. Won't that be better preparation for our futures as citizens of this county? And without an informed citizenry, our very democracy is at stake. To quote a supporter of public education, Thomas Jefferson, "An informed citizenry is at the heart of a dynamic democracy."

I am fortunate to have strong relationships with several teachers in my district and what I can tell you is that they are AFRAID of this legislation passing and having it undermine their ability to teach real history as well as discussing current events and social issues. What happens if any one student is uncomfortable? They can complain, and then that teacher's license is on the line. That school's funding is on the line. If these bills pass, you will set up an untenable and most unfortunate environment in our schools, and it will be a profound disservice to each and every one of us.

As a student, I ask you to strongly consider my testimony opposing HB 322 and HB 327, and vote NO on these bills.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,

Owen Ganor

Student

