

Vicki Rich, Ohio resident: Written Testimony, Ohio HB 103

I offer written proponent testimony for HB 103 because I place high value on giving children access to quality education about their heritage and citizenship. In short, I agree with a quote attributed to John Adams that “Children should be educated in the principles of freedom.” Children in our public schools must have the opportunity to learn about the form and function of our government and constitutional system, so that they can flourish responsibly as citizens. I support HB 103 and its goal to create a task force review and recommend statewide standards for K-12 social studies standards.

Students in our public schools deserve to know their heritage—their birthright of freedom—and to learn how and why our freedom and self-government principles came to be. I am grateful for *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance’s Model K-12 Social Studies Standards* because these standards focus on “content knowledge in history, geography, civics, and economics that American citizens need to have so that they can preserve their liberty.” I believe most Americans would agree that our public schools should provide our children with civics and social studies education that meet at least these standards. We owe it to our children and our communities that our children are able learn who we are and how and why our nation was developed with the principles and structure it has.

The approach of HB 103 (to form a task force to develop standards) is a good approach because it calls for well-rounded input and review from different perspectives. A task force approach also allows room for recognizing any standards already in place that are already robust—and provides a channel for uncovering best practices that can become standards so that more students benefit. A task force can also review any gaps or vague language in current standards and recommend areas for improvement so that kids will not be limited by general learning topics and social awareness; but are also challenged to understand historical facts and be able to identify and write knowledgeably and competently on historical subjects and our heritage of liberty.

Understanding our heritage and history is an important part of our children’s education. HB 103 allows the *American Birthright* model standards to be a basis for consideration but does not lock in any rigid standards. The task force—made up of Ohio citizens, Ohio parents, Ohio educators, and Ohio policymakers-- will be able to recommend standards adapted for our state. And those recommendations must then go before the Legislature for further review and approval before they would become standards. There is nothing to fear from this bill or the task force it creates. There is only gain from people coming together to give a dedicated focus for our children’s education.

I’m grateful to Representatives Jones and Richardson for introducing HB 103. As a citizen of this state and this nation, I support this bill because this bill supports our young people by ensuring they will have access to the best social studies education we can provide. I urge the members of the Ohio Primary and Secondary Education Committee to pass HB 103 and send it to the House floor for consideration.