



**House Primary and Secondary Education Committee
H.B. 103 - Opponent Testimony**

May 16, 2023

**Alison Paxson
Senior Policy Associate
Children's Defense Fund-Ohio**

Good afternoon, Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler-Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee. My name is Alison Paxson, and I am a Senior Policy Associate for the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio (CDF-Ohio). With more than four decades of advocacy on behalf of Ohio's children, it is the mission of the Children's Defense Fund to champion policies and programs that lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, and ensure their access to health care, quality education, and nutritional wellness. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to H.B. 103.

Our children - and indeed, our democracy - thrive when students have access to rich, culturally relevant pedagogy and high quality curricula that deepen their understanding of themselves and all they have in common with others in a multiracial, multicultural democratic society.

However, H.B. 103 would fundamentally undermine the social studies education that our students need to develop a well-rounded, unbiased view of our nation's history and essential critical thinking skills through exposure to diverse perspectives and accurately complex historical nuance. We firmly oppose this bill and urge this committee to reject its proposed taskforce to develop statewide academic standards in social studies for grades K-12 based on the standards published in "American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards."

We are very concerned by this proposed legislation. The American Birthright standards have not been adopted by any other state and go against our current educational standards, as well as those in states across the country. American Birthright standards are by and large explicitly not recommended by state and national social studies educational content experts. We must heed these experts. The [National Council for the Social Studies](#) (NCSS), founded in 1921, is the largest professional association in the United States dedicated to supporting and strengthening social studies education. They issued the following statement regarding "American Birthright:



children's
defense fund
ohio

The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards”, making clear these standards do not meet their expectations for best practices for scholarship and inclusivity in social studies curriculum and should not be used in Ohio:

“We view these suggested standards as an attempt to return to a time when United States social studies classrooms presented a single narrative of U.S. and Western history that glorified selected aspects of history while minimizing the experiences, contributions, and perspectives of Indigenous peoples, people of color, women, the LGBTQIA+ community, the working class, and countless others. The writers of the suggested standards use outdated language, have a clear political motive, and promote content and approaches to social studies and history education that do not align with those recommended by experts in social studies content areas.”

We can only equip Ohio's students with the knowledge and skills they need to be leaders in bringing about a better future for all of us so long as we ensure they have an accurate and truthful understanding of the challenges and triumphs of our past. This means that Ohio’s students must have access to quality social studies education that represents the histories, contributions, and identities of all of us. Momentum for American Birthright standards stems directly from powerful outside interests driving an extremist political view that would hurt the futures of our children and our state. We urge this committee to reject H.B. 103 and instead focus its energies on passing critically needed legislation, such as the recently introduced [H.B. 171](#), that would ensure a more comprehensive study of histories and cultures in Ohio’s classrooms to better reflect the experiences and too often ignored histories of our diverse communities.