

Testimony for HB 171
Submitted by: Sanampreet Gill
Testifying as Proponent

Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, I respectfully urge the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee to vote yes in support of H.B. 171.

My name is Sanampreet Gill, I am asking this committee to support updating Ohio's K-12 social studies model curriculum to reflect all Ohian's backgrounds and histories. As an educator, I can affirm that we have a strong inquiry led social studies model curriculum. Children get excited about learning through making meaningful connections through exploration and high-level questioning. Education through the process of inquiry engages young minds in problem solving and experiential learning which are all critical in today's society. A model social studies curriculum that is inquiry based and reflects migration histories, experiences, and societal contributions of a multitude of Ohioans is a powerful tool to build community, sustain and enhance our economy and educational systems. Research shows when students are reflected in their curriculum, they are eager to engage, be active participants in their learning and ultimately succeed.

As a Sikh American, I'd like to express my sincerest gratitude to Senator Roegner and you all for designating April as Sikh Awareness month. In April, my family comes together to celebrate Vaisakhi - the founding of Khalsa Panth, a great part of my identity. Thank you for recognizing that Sikhs have made remarkable contributions to the establishment of our society. On the contrary, Sikhs have also suffered an increase in hate crimes since Sept. 11, 2021 due to a lack of education and knowledge about our culture. Similarly, African, Asian, Pacific Islander, Jewish, African, Arab, and Native American communities, to name a few, face similar challenges of misrepresentation and underrepresentation in our model curriculum. Through sharing experiences, connecting through similarities and learning from differences - there is a place for everyone at the table, in the classroom community, on our planet.

Identity and self-concept are developed first and foremost through repeated use of a child's name - the most meaningful sound one can hear. A child begins to understand who they are through their parents' accent, origin, and pronunciation of their name. Throughout schooling, I faced instances of bullying - in 1st grade, I came crying home to my mother begging her to shorten my name to "Sam" and I was firmly told "no". She explained the origin and beautiful meaning behind my identity. She instilled the core values of Sikhism in me - love for all beings, selfless service, humility, tolerance and equality for all. Next time, someone introduces themselves with a name that is challenging to pronounce, pause and try to learn it phonetically, see their eyes light up, ask them what it means, what is the origin. A Sikh is a disciple, a learner and I am fortunate to learn from my students through mindful interactions, sharing personal experiences and active listening.

Educators, by nature, are mindful and reflective practitioners. My colleagues are amongst the most dedicated professionals I know who go above and beyond to seek out resources for their students. All children in the state of Ohio deserve access to a model curricula that is accurate and reflective to ensure the best quality education for our increasingly diverse population of students. H.B. 171 is supported by the **vast majority of Ohio teachers**, with endorsements from Ohio Education Association, Ohio Federation of Teachers, and Ohio Council of the Social Studies.

We reside in an ever-changing world where we must continue to promote the values of recognition, dignity, and continue to care for and respect all creation. It is truly about reaching ALL of our students, unlocking their limitless potential, and working *alongside* them. Our work is *accompaniment* - we are not telling students what to do or what and how to think - we are *facilitators* of a safe, constructive, inquiry-led dialogue and accompany them in terms of what they need at that moment. Before I can teach the child in front of me, the child must feel seen, heard, validated. A social studies model curriculum that reflects our community will do just that - whether we are traditional, human-centered, student-centered, economy-centered, - we can all agree that each child in Ohio matters.

For these reasons, my educator heart respectfully urges the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee to vote yes in support of H.B. 171. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to share my story in support of this legislation and be a voice for our students.