

Testimony for HB 171
Submitted by: Mike Halaiko
Testifying as Proponent

Chair Bird, Vice Chair Fowler Arthur, Ranking Member Robinson and members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee,

My name is Mike Halaiko. I live in Pickerington, and I am a retired Educator with over 40 years of service, as a teacher and administrator, in Ohio Public Schools. I am asking this committee to support HB 171 which updates the Social Studies model curriculum to better reflect the histories of all Ohioans by including the migration histories, societal contributions, and experiences of a range of communities in Ohio and the United States who are not currently represented in our classrooms.

I believe that passing this bill is good for Ohio and Ohio students because...

- I am the grandson of immigrants, who fled their countries in the early part of the 20th Century, to seek refuge and a better life in this country for themselves and their descendants.
- Not long after my grandparents arrived, there was a fear campaign waged by narrow minded nativists maintaining that people from Central Europe should be banned from coming to this country because they looked different, and initially they spoke different languages other than English.
- What nativists from all ages fail to recognize is that not too many years before a new wave of immigrants arrived on our shores, many of their own ancestors were the “new immigrants”.
- This is an all too familiar case of history repeating itself.
- I believe an updated K-12 model social studies curriculum can begin to stem the cycle of people being rejected and not being welcome because they are different.
- The updated model curriculum proposed in HB 171 will provide a space for all students to feel welcome and recognize that differences in others are a good asset in making us an even stronger and more vibrant country.
- The need for an updated K-12 model curriculum for social studies is essential for us and our descendants to better learn to value and be better sensitized to the unique contributions that our diverse cultural backgrounds bring to making this a free and democratic country.
- An updated model curriculum would provide rich, engaging options for teaching and learning social studies in Ohio. It will equip teachers with activities and lessons that can support and develop respect for the students in our classrooms who come from different backgrounds than our own. Students are also more engaged when they see their communities reflected in the classroom. It’s important that our students can connect to the information that they’re learning in school.
- A [2020 study from the National Education Association](#) shows us that students of color, in particular, who participated in courses that reflected different identities, cultures, and backgrounds had a greater sense of belonging and sense of self.

- H.B. 171 takes advantage of the existing curriculum review process, providing options and enriching the guidance used by our education experts to continue developing the best curriculum for Ohio's students.
- We fail our kids when we don't provide them with an education that truly mirrors Ohio's current makeup as a state. H.B. 171 can solve for that by educating students about the experiences, migration, and contributions of a range of communities that already, and in many cases, have long called Ohio home.
- H.B. 171 has the backing and support of the vast majority of Ohio teachers, with endorsements from Ohio Education Association, Ohio Federation of Teachers, and Ohio Council of the Social Studies.

I respectfully urge the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee to consider my testimony and to vote yes in support of H.B. 171. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to testify in support of this legislation.