

Testimony for HB 171
Submitted by: Emily Momohara
Testifying as Proponent
December 9, 2023

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

My name is Emily Momohara and I live in Cincinnati. I am an educator and concerned citizen 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 in my capacity as a Professor I teach Ohio students after they have left our K-12 system. There are two areas where I see directly that students from Ohio Public Schools are behind other students in their social understanding and maturity.

1. **Our Ohio students are behind.** Many of my students coming out of Ohio Public Schools do not understand each other and do not have proper respect for those who are not like them. Students are surprised to hear about long standing communities in Cincinnati such as Appalachian or Hispanic. These students are marginalized when it comes to other students accepting them for cultures and way of life. In order to have a healthy classroom environment, I must take time to discuss Social Studies, specifically history. This disrupts the college level curriculum that I design and deliver.
2. **Ohio students don't value themselves.** The disenfranchisement of students who are not part of mainstream education materials is evident in the way students value themselves. I am regularly surprised that though students understand the role Cincinnati played in the Underground Railroad, they do not know about the many contributions that Black Cincinnatians contributed to this great city and state. They don't see how important they are to the fabric of our community and how deserving they are of a college education.

On a personal note, much of my research is based in Japanese American history. I am continually shocked at the lack of knowledge that students have about the existence of Asians in Ohio, let alone the historical events I study. In the 2020 census, 326,135 people marked Asian American Pacific Islander on the census. Not just for myself, but for the children sharing my background, I strongly believe the stories of our communities should be reflected in the classroom.

H.B. 171 does not add any extra layer of work for the administration. It 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.

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.

Thank you for serving our state and our students,
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. Momohara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Emily Momohara