



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

My name is Lucas George and I am a current 8th grade teacher in Pickerington, Ohio and serve on the Ohio Council for the Social Studies executive board as the legislative liaison. In my career, I have taught all grades 7-12 and have instructed inclusion, on-level, honors and college level courses. I am a product of Wittenberg University and the Ashland University MAHG program. Furthermore, in 2019 I was selected as the Ohio Council for the Social Studies Emerging Leader of the Year and as a James Madison Fellow. Most recently, I was awarded the 2022 Gilder Lehrman Ohio History Teacher of the Year.

A social studies curriculum should reflect the rich diversity of the population it is aiming to serve and HB 171 aligns with that vision. Not only will HB 171 promote instruction on various cultures, but it will also safeguard the contributions of these groups within our Ohio Model Curriculum where citizens from all walks of life can contribute to its implementation. OCSS endorses HB 171 for the following reasons: best social studies practices point to teaching history through multiple perspectives, it can lead to positive outcomes in terms of mental health and sense of belonging, and it can have positive impacts on students of color.

Diverse narratives lie at the heart of effective and culturally responsive social studies education. By exploring historical events through various viewpoints, including those of different ethnicities and cultures, we create a more comprehensive understanding. This approach not only avoids a biased narrative but also fosters inclusion, critical thinking, and a connection to students' diverse backgrounds.

Engaging with courses that explore different ethnicities yields numerous positive outcomes. Students benefit from increased graduation rates, demonstrating a persistence and commitment to completing high school. Improved test performance is another result, as exposure to diverse perspectives enhances cognitive skills and critical thinking. Moreover, these courses foster increased attendance and participation, creating a more dynamic and stimulating learning environment.

For students of color, studying different ethnicities has a profound impact. It cultivates a stronger sense of school belonging, encouraging attendance and active engagement. Additionally, exposure to diverse perspectives contributes to a positive acculturation process, helping students navigate between cultures while maintaining their identity. This, in turn, enhances mental well-being and motivation, creating a supportive and enriching learning atmosphere.



In all, this bill would support the best practices in social studies education, promote the amazing multicultural education that Ohio needs, and develop a strong sense of belonging for our students which aligns with the bipartisan goal of prioritizing mental health. In Ohio, students deserve a curriculum that showcases the expansive history and development from all who contributed to what Ohio is today. Let's build that curriculum hand-in-hand with students, teachers, parents, community members, and all those dedicated towards making our social studies curriculum truly one that reflects the makeup of Ohio classrooms.

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