



The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

OHIO EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Ohio State and Local Government Committee
Scott DiMauro – President, Ohio Education Association
HB 327 – Opponent Testimony
September 22, 2021

Chair Wiggam, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, my name is Scott DiMauro. I am a high school social studies teacher from Worthington with 16 years of classroom teaching experience and currently serving as President of the Ohio Education Association (OEA). Thank you for this opportunity to provide opponent testimony on HB 327.

HB 327 prohibits school districts, charter schools, private schools that enroll voucher students, state agencies, and state institutions of higher education from offering teaching, instruction, professional development, or training that “promotes” or “insinuates” a “divisive concept.” Taken together, the list of “divisive concepts” appears to be intended as a reference to so-called “Critical Race Theory” (CRT).

Neither the National Education Association (NEA) nor OEA advocate for teaching “CRT” to students. While there may be disagreement on the precise definition of “CRT,” OEA is clear in its advocacy to provide honesty in education for students and protect educators from harassment or fear for doing their jobs.

While HB 327 states it permits teaching about “divisive concepts” in an “objective manner and without endorsement,” these distinctions are open to interpretation and likely to become frighteningly incomprehensible when taking into account the extreme and draconian penalties the bill will bestow upon students, schools, and educators for perceived violations of “divisive concept” prohibitions.

Some examples from HB 327:

- Students will not receive graduation credit for a course that includes any of the prohibited “divisive concepts.”
- If the state superintendent of public instruction or the chancellor of higher education determines through a “confirmed report” from a student, parent, teacher, or community member that a school or state institution of higher education knowingly or recklessly violates a “divisive concept” prohibition in the bill, state funding shall be withheld in the following amounts:

- (1) For a first offense, 25% state funding deduction
- (2) For a second offense, 50% state funding deduction
- (3) For a third offense, 100% state funding deduction



- Requires the State Board of Education to punish classroom teachers and school administrators if it determines through a confirmed report that a teacher, principal, or school district superintendent knowingly or recklessly violates the bill’s “divisive concept” provisions:
 - (1) For a first offense issue an official licensure admonishment,
 - (2) For a second offense suspend licensure for a period of time determined by the State Board based on severity and circumstances, or
 - (3) For a third offense, revoke licensure for a period of time determined by the State Board based on severity and circumstances

- Requires state institutions of higher education to change faculty tenure policies to consider as a negative factor in employment and tenure decisions any confirmed reports that a faculty member or other employee knowingly or recklessly violates the bill’s “divisive concept” prohibitions. The bill also requires review of all grant programs to identify any grants that may require certification that a recipient will not use funds to promote “divisive concepts.”

These kinds of extreme penalties based on murky prohibitions will create an oppressive and fear-based education environment that is not in the interest of students.

Again, while neither the National Education Association (NEA) nor OEA advocate for teaching “CRT” to K-12 students, we strongly advocate for teaching the truth and protecting our members against harassment or fear for doing their jobs.

OEA opposes HB 327 for we as an organization believe that honesty and integrity are essential in the classroom because students deserve an honest and reflective education. Understanding the multiple perspectives and experiences that have shaped the country and the world to this point is the best tool we can give students to prepare them to interact with what is now an interconnected society and economy.

Likewise, this means creating an educational environment that invites diverse experiences and multiple perspectives, as well as providing the resources and materials for all students to engage fully with the standards-based curriculum.

In our locals, we are supporting efforts to help our members professionally in their efforts to create inclusive learning environments, celebrate diversity, and advocate for policies and programs that equitably meet all students’ needs.

Efforts to oppose this perspective have been part of a carefully coordinated national campaign and have resulted in divisive and dishonest attacks on educators and public schools in many of our communities.

OEA is not aware of instances in local schools where topics considered “critical race theory” are being taught and we discourage an approach to this issue that starts down the road of censorship.

No students are being taught to be ashamed of who they are or who their ancestors were. Quite the opposite; they are being empowered to be proud of who they are, regardless of where they come from.

Teachers teach the state's learning standards and district curriculum as they have been prepared and entrusted to do without censorship or intimidation. Those stoking this divisive rhetoric are trying to tell educators how to teach our kids.

Let's trust Ohio's elected local school districts, school board members, administrators, and professional classroom educators to do their jobs on behalf of students.

That concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.