

## **Statement from the Elected Leadership of BEA on Ohio House Bills 616, 322, and 327**

Recently, Ohio HB 616, 322, and 327 were introduced to the Ohio House of Representatives. We reject these divisive and hurtful bills in the strongest possible terms as they erode educators' ability to appropriately teach our students.

These three house bills severely restrict the abilities of local school districts and educators to create learning environments that best serve their students. The bills exist as a means to limit the education of our students by labeling some topics and viewpoints as out of bounds. We educators teach our students every day using Ohio's Learning Standards. We determine the best way for students to respectfully and appropriately make sense of their own experiences and histories by interrogating the past and engaging with themselves and their communities. HB 616, 322, and 327 limit the resources that we can use to help our students engage with their world.

We educators of BEA know that students learn best when they are appropriately challenged and supported at school. We welcome all of our students with open arms and do our best to foster a community of mutual respect in our schools. While students are in our care, we support them with all of our love and respect. If passed, HB 616, 322, and 327 would chill the atmosphere at school, making it more difficult or, indeed, impossible to adequately teach students a number of concepts and to support them as they learn and grow. In addition, it would instill a culture of fear of potential reprisal in our ranks as we would need to worry about whether something said in good faith runs afoul of these vaguely written bills.

As currently written, these bills prevent educators from using sources that are deemed "divisive" by the vague standards of the bills. This would make students' education less effective. Right now, we are educating students who are discovering history. This history has dates, people, and events that we can be proud of. This history also has examples of slavery, genocide, and other failures of humanity. We teach this history to inform our students so that all students can work toward a more equitable future.

As educators, we teach students as they are. We cherish and support their ever-growing personalities. The last thing that our students need are roadblocks thrown in front of their learning and growth. These bills propose poorly considered solutions to vaguely defined problems that do not exist. They should never be passed in our state.