



Proposed Ohio House Bill 616 bans teaching about sexual orientation, gender identity, and 'divisive' concepts about race

It is simply despicable that our state legislators are once again using fear to rally their base with the introduction of [Ohio House Bill \(HB\) 616](#). Just as with the “Don’t Say Gay or Trans” law in Florida, we must be determined to do everything we can to stop this from happening in Ohio.

The proposed bill restricts what teachers can say about sexual orientation and gender identity in the classroom, perpetuating homophobia and transphobia. If signed into law, HB 616 would also restrict what teachers can — or cannot — say about African American history. How can teachers educate our students about American history without discussing the impact of slavery and racism? Or the contributions of abolitionists, advocates, and activists?

HB 616 will allow school boards to “not select any textbook, instructional material, or academic curriculum that promotes any divisive or inherently racist concept.” It goes on to define the “divisive or inherently racist concepts” as Critical Race Theory; Intersectional Theory; the 1619 Project; diversity, equity, and inclusion learning outcomes; inherited racial guilt; and “any other concept the state board of education defines as divisive or inherently racist...”

Teachers found in violation of the proposed law could ultimately have their licenses suspended or revoked, and schools could lose funding.

Ohio is not the only state where these laws are being considered. A reported 38 states have pending legislation that forbids the teaching or “affirming” of certain concepts connected to race, gender, or sexual orientation.

Equitas Health strongly condemns any attempt – political, social, economic, or medical – to perpetuate racism, white supremacy, homophobia, and transphobia.

Equitas Health exists to provide quality, affirming, and affordable healthcare to the LGBTQ+ community, people living with HIV/AIDS, and anyone left out or kept out of traditional healthcare systems. We cannot fulfill this mission without serving those at the intersections of race, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Our [core values](#) include acceptance, respect, inclusivity, and cultural humility. HB 616 is the very antithesis of these values.

We must take action. I encourage you to join me in contacting your state representatives by visiting ohiohouse.gov. Tell them this measure is wrong for Ohio’s students, teachers, and our communities. It should not become law. Our voices and votes have power.