



Statement to the Senate Education Committee

Prepared Remarks for February 19, 2022

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Verna Cahoon. I chair the Education Committee of the League of Women Voters of Kentucky, and our President, Fran Wagner, has asked me to speak for the League today.

Our organization has an abiding commitment to citizenship education, which is dependent on social studies instruction. Quoting from the policy we set in 2013:

The League of Women Voters of Kentucky believes that schools have a crucial role in preparing students to be informed and engaged citizens. Civics education should focus on knowledge and understanding of governments (e.g. local, state, national, and other forms), including their structures, functions, and effects.

Effective civics education includes preparing students with the skills to participate critically and solve problems in civic life, and it provides practice for students working cooperatively in a community of citizens with rights and responsibilities.

Based on this lasting commitment, the League of Women Voters of Kentucky opposes Senate Bill 138. We believe this bill would impair robust student engagement with American history and effective preparation of young Kentuckians for citizenship and democracy.

We specifically oppose limits on instructional materials that confront inequality. Students need to learn that there have been advocates for inequality as well as equality. To give two painful examples, they should know about the ruling in *Scott v. Sandford* and the ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Supreme Court decisions that explicitly favored legal inequality in addition to *Brown v. Board of Education's* affirmation of the significant value of equality.

We also oppose legislating how teachers, trained and dedicated professionals, conduct instruction. Students bring varied strengths, cultures, and experiences to the classroom, and serving all students well requires nimble, flexible, responsive teaching. Success for all learners cannot be built on legislative mandates that hamper teachers' ability to adapt instruction to the needs of every student by imposing tight constraints that do not reflect realities in the classroom.

Limiting what is taught and discussed in the classroom will hamper students' ability to responsibly operate in the increasingly complex world in which they are immersed. How can schools help young people deal with the messages they are receiving on social media and from their peers if teachers cannot help students discuss important, even controversial, topics in the classroom?

Finally, as a retired principal, I need to say a word on behalf of our education workforce. Over the last two years, our teachers and administrators remained committed to their students under extraordinary circumstances, mastering new technology and ever-changing safety protocols. Schools are getting many notices of retirements and resignations, and our teacher preparation programs do not have enough teacher candidates to fill the vacant slots. It would be a grave mistake to make teaching even more difficult with this bill's burdensome requirements.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns, and we respectfully ask you to vote no on Senate Bill 138.