Interfaith Alliance of Iowa Action Fund
Connie Ryan, executive director
HSB258

Interfaith Alliance of Iowa Action Fund is opposed to HSB258.

Our concerns are around the prohibition in educational institutions addressing privilege, values, bias, etc. regarding race and sex.

If we as a nation are going to make progress in addressing racism and sexism, individually and in our institutions, laws that tie the hands of educators as they educate and work with our young people on these issues impede this progress. This bill does precisely that by limiting how and what can be said and what is out of bounds.

The list of "divisive concepts" includes several concepts that are problematic if an educator or trainer is going to facilitate open, honest conversation (e.g. is our state fundamentally racist; are people who are white born with privilege that oppresses others; does a man or a white person bear responsibility for the impact of history). To prohibit these as "divisive concepts" is to prohibit real conversation with our young people.

Similarly, to say the "race or sex stereotyping" including the ideas of values, privileges, status, beliefs, and more as being prohibited begs the question of how do you talk about implicit bias when all of that is excluded from the conversation?

The legislation says that it is not to be construed as to prohibit instruction on divisive concepts or prohibit the promotion of various types of diversity and inclusion. If an educational institution cannot have real conversation about privilege, bias, and our nation's history, how is instruction or promotion of the concepts possible?

The legislation will have a chilling impact on our educational institutions in having honest conversations and real training in addressing systemic racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and more.

Interfaith Alliance of Iowa urges you to oppose HSB258.