

Maria Vitória de Rezende Grisi
Testimony on HB 151
House Higher Education Committee
May 17, 2023

Dear esteemed members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Maria Vitória de Rezende Grisi, and I am a second-year Ph.D. student in the Studies of the Portuguese-Speaking World program at OSU. I am grateful for the opportunity to testify today and share my strong opposition to House Bill 151 and its companion bill SB 83.

Let me make one thing clear: these bills are hypocritical and do not protect freedom of speech. HB 151 aims to remove academic discomfort from our classrooms when uncomfortable topics are prevalent in our world. We cannot and should not avoid discussing these topics in the classroom simply because they make some students uncomfortable. Rather, we should encourage productive discussions on why these topics are uncomfortable and what can be done to address today's issues.

We should spend our time and resources combating hate speech and violence, such as the neo-Nazis who threaten lives in front of gay bars, fighting gun violence that disproportionately affects Columbus, and

supporting affirmative action policies to keep our most vulnerable students in school and university. Education is a long-term investment, but it is the most beneficial one.

HB 151 will not enhance higher education. Its opponents have made it clear that they never asked for this bill. Instead, we should encourage our students to seek evidence to support their ideas and provide them with tools to tackle the real-world challenges they will face. We live in a diverse world, and erasing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) from university policies does not mean that diversity does not exist outside of its space. We should help universities become more representative of the diversity we see in the world. Large companies have DEI policies, so why should we make the university take a step back? What kind of professionals do we want to produce?

Another critical issue is the demand to make syllabi public and include professional qualifications. This serves no purpose other than surveillance and allows non-university-connected individuals to intimidate instructors. Our professional qualifications have already been evaluated when we

entered the university and are reevaluated every semester and academic year through student evaluations and internal peer evaluations.

Lastly, I stand in solidarity with the right to strike. I come from a country where significant changes are achieved through people uniting. Fear-based politics is authoritarianism, and banning strikes is dictatorial.

In conclusion, I urge you to consider the impact of HB 151 and SB 83 on higher education and the wider community. Let us work together to make our universities more inclusive and representative of the diverse world we live in.

Thank you.