

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 83
Committee- Senate Workforce and Higher Education
Testimony Date: Wednesday May 17, 2023.

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Columbus State Community College Student- Social Work and Human Services Program

Chairman Cirino , Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

My name is Kristyna Clark, and I am a student attending Columbus State Community College, currently working to get my AA in the Social Work and Human Service Program. My hope is to get my BSA of Social Work and eventually my Masters, all through the Higher Education programs and Universities that Ohio provides. It is my fearful for the future of our education system and generations to come if Senate Bill 83 is approved and enforced in schools and other educational programs. As a student in the Social Work program at CSCC, it is part of my training and future expectations that I engage in education that this bill deems as “controversial belief or policy”. How can I better serve the community I live in and the groups within my community, if my education is limited in structure and purpose? Part of the Higher Education system is to understand the world around you and how is an individual able to do that if the point of Senate Bill 83 takes away the points of education that would help and encourage that growth? Simply, it would not. Diversity, equality, and inclusion are the backbone of the work that I hope to do in the future and without those programs and the ability to have conversations in the classroom about “uncomfortable” topics, i.e., slavery, colonialism, gentrification, racism, etc., it limits my ability, and countless others, to understand how to help individuals who identify, experience, and live life differently than myself.

One of the mission statements Senate Bill 83 states, that institutions must incorporate “its dedication to an ethic of civil and free inquiry, which respects the autonomy of each member, supports individual capacities for growth, and tolerates the differences in opinion that naturally occur in a public higher education community.” My question for the Senate Committee supporting this Bill is, how are we able to grow, tolerate differences, and maintain autonomy, whether it’s on an institutional or individual level, if this bill takes away those traits—growth, tolerance, and autonomy? If you want children in the classroom to grow and progress our country to places of power and success, you cannot structure their education in a way that makes you feel comfortable. Those who are in support of this Bill and/or have created the structure of it, are not the ones who are sitting in the classroom today. Shouldn’t the student’s voice be the one who is heard the loudest and felt the deepest on this topic since WE are the ones who it impacts? I hope to have a constructive and open conversation about how we can better the future of our education system and our community together rather than with the use of a Bill that could destroy and overstep the rights of students and teachers.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit opponent testimony on Senate Bill 83.