

For HB 151:

Testimony of Teresa Villa-Ignacio, Ph.D.
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Representative Tom Young, Chair

May 15, 2023

Chair Young, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the House Higher Education Committee: My name is Teresa Villa-Ignacio, and I am a professor of French and Translation at Kent State University. I do not represent Kent State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to House Bill 151.

This bill would have a catastrophic effect on the execution of Kent State University's mission. Of particular concern are the sections that would eliminate the faculty's collective bargaining rights (Sec. 3345.455, lines 1163-1173), increase the workload of Kent State's full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty on 9 month appointments by 25% (Sub-section D.1.b of Sec. 3345.45, lines 1016-1024), explicitly censor the University's speech (lines 744-748, 752, 754, and 795-797), and require that the detailed syllabi created by faculty for each of their classes be posted in a searchable format on the University's website in a way that is accessible to the public without any sort of sign-in or registration (lines 656-699). Such provisions would drive current students, faculty, and staff to leave Kent State, and would make it more difficult for us to recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff in the future.

Faculty are already overburdened with teaching and service commitments. Increasing the full-time faculty workload by 25% would negatively impact faculty productivity and as a result would negatively impact student outcomes. The faculty's collective bargaining rights make it possible for the fullest range of faculty and administrators to make decisions in the best interest of our students and the present and future of the institution. Stripping away those rights puts our public institutions at risk of mismanagement. Faculty already submit annual workload reports to our departmental administrators; to overburden them with any additional review tasks would also drain resources from where they're needed most: student support and curricular innovation.

Under the proposed bill, the University would be unable to oppose systematic racism, sexism, and discrimination based on LGBTQ+ status; endorse allyship, social justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion; and endorse climate policies and the idea of a sustainable future. Yet, unprompted by faculty members, our students arrive eager to master the complexity of these issues. And more than ever, employers are seeking graduates who are deeply familiar with approaches to diversity, equity, inclusion, and sustainability, and ready to implement their learning on their first day on the job. Censoring speech at the University would diminish the quality of higher education in Ohio, and lead to long-term, devastatingly negative impacts on Ohio's economy.