

Testimony of Dr. Daniela Jauk-Ajamie Ph.D. before the House Higher Education Committee Rep. Tom Young, Chair, May 15, 2023

Chair Young, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

I am Daniela Jauk-Ajamie, an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice Studies and Sociology at the University of Akron, where I have obtained my Doctoral degree as a Fulbright student from Austria in 2013.

I am submitting testimony in **opposition to Substitute House Bill 151** as a citizen of Ohio, and not as a representative of my institution. I am an international scholar who has been teaching and researching at various universities in the United States and Europe since 20 years. I am submitting testimony Based on my broad international experience and my expertise I can inform the committee that this **bill will have a devastating effect on Ohio's students and higher education** more broadly in Ohio.

I am driven by my passion for teaching and my deep interest in student wellbeing, and I can say with absolute certainty that – if SHB151 comes to pass – Ohio's students will be severely shortchanged and they – as well as their parents, will notice it and pay with (missing) votes. The **future of our beautiful state and of democracy more broadly is at risk**. In particular, I am taking issue with the following implications of the bill:

- While the bill's goal seems to be to promote the diversity of opinions and free speech, it curtails exactly that. It seeks to **dictate what is free speech** and it undermines the dissemination of state-of-the-art research.
- This is legislation that projects hostility toward faculty and higher education. The US already fares very badly when it comes to educational attainment in international comparison, and this **bill will contribute to the decrease of academic degrees obtained** in this state due to brain drain and political opposition.
- As an Austrian-born US citizen, I bring a sensitivity to fascist regimes and tactics to my political analysis. The **curtailing of free speech and diversity of opinion is a fascist tactic** and undermines democracy.
- The bill fosters an **atmosphere of fear that kills academic creativity and causes brain drain**. Even now I already had conversations with colleagues (who comes with degrees from Ivy League universities and contribute greatly to teaching and research at our institution) who ponder to leave the state because academic freedom and free speech are at risk.

If you want high-quality faculty and high-quality education at Ohio's universities, you **MUST** provide an environment of free speech, diversity of opinions, a tenure system as well as shared governance. With HB151 you are about to abolish all that, severely threaten Ohio's economy and go backwards into a dark history.

I urge you not to undermine freedom of speech and freedom of thinking, and evidence-based teaching at Ohio's universities.

Dr. Daniela Jauk-Ajamie