



**Opponent Testimony of Rachael Collyer, Ohio Student Association  
House Bill 151  
House Higher Education Committee  
May 17th, 2023**

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Rachael Collyer, and in addition to being a lifelong Ohio resident and a graduate of the Ohio State University, I am the program director of the Ohio Student Association (OSA), which I've been involved with for 11 years now, starting as a sophomore at Ohio State. OSA is a statewide grassroots organization with student-led chapters at nine college campuses across the state, bringing together young Ohioans from different backgrounds and with different experiences to imagine and fight for a better future for ALL Ohioans.

One of the core focuses of our organization is supporting college students to make their voices heard around higher education policy, as they are the people directly affected by it. In the weeks since Senate Bill 83 and then House Bill 151 were introduced, I have had numerous conversations with students on campuses across the state about this bill. Students overwhelmingly oppose this legislation and are deeply concerned about what its passing would mean for our campuses and classrooms. I think that the record-breaking volume of testimony given at the Senate Bill 83 hearing on April 19th made it abundantly clear how students feel about this attack on higher education, and if it didn't, I want to point to the testimony workshops, public forums, and multiple rallies in opposition to SB 83 and HB 151 that students across Ohio have organized over the past few weeks.

While some changes have been made to the original content of SB 83, the spirit of the bills remains the same, and the impact will still be devastating. For a state that is already experiencing brain drain and that continues to fail to adequately fund higher education or provide the level of support Ohio students need to access and afford it, it seems counterproductive at best to pass legislation that would so deeply disadvantage our public universities. Having high-performing and competitive universities that set students up to succeed and draw more young people to move to or stay in Ohio is critical for the future of our state. For that to be possible, we must have diverse opinions and backgrounds represented in the classroom, and we cannot impose censorship on education. Intellectual diversity should not, and in fact cannot, come at the cost of academic freedom and critical thinking. Not only that, but topics and issues like race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and climate change are essential to equip students to thrive in their careers and in an increasingly diverse and global workforce. For the



state to restrict discussion on such a sweeping set of topics is unethical, harmful, and puts our institutions and our students at a disadvantage.

If this bill is passed, institutions will not be allowed to “endorse, oppose, comment, or take action” with regard to concepts like “sustainability,” “inclusion,” “allyship,” and “diversity.” To be sustainable, to be diverse, to be inclusive, are not and should not be considered inherently “controversial” things, but values that our universities should be striving for. These are values that students hold and that students want to see reflected in their universities.

HB 151 insists that institutions will enforce “equality of opportunity” but acts to dismantle existing programs that seek to create it by attacking mandated diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings or DEI programs. Different students face very different types and degrees of challenges. A ‘one size fits all’ approach causes so many students to fall through the cracks who could have otherwise been better situated and supported. DEI programs are about student success for underrepresented populations, and creating resources to aid these students. This does not disadvantage or discriminate against other students. Ohioans understand that we all benefit when we all, regardless of income or race, have the opportunity to fulfill our maximum potential. When all students have the ability to participate in classes and thrive on campus, they can contribute to *real* intellectual diversity.

This bill is loaded with examples of government overreach and unnecessary restrictions that would hurt students and staff alike, such as prohibiting all employees of any state institution of higher education from striking. Students stand in solidarity with professors and university staff, and many students are in fact university employees themselves. OSA and Ohio students vehemently oppose this attack on workers’ rights.

With college enrollment already suffering from the recent pandemic, I want to reiterate that we cannot afford to make education more costly, more restrictive, and less supportive to our students. What young person would want to get their education in a state where education is censored? Where diversity, equity, and inclusion are not valued? This bill would put Ohio’s students at a disadvantage by censoring important topics and dismantling critical programs used to support the student body so that all students can thrive, regardless of income or race. HB 151 is contradictory to our values as an organization and as Ohioans. On behalf of all of the members of the Ohio Student Association, we urge committee members and legislators to prioritize student interests and vote no on this bill before it can harm our institutions and our future as a state.

Thank you.