

Testimony of Dr. Robert L. Peralta. 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 Dr. Robert Peralta, a Professor of Sociology at the University of Akron.

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 have taught college student at UA for 19 years. I am submitting testimony based on my teaching and research experience to 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 Ohio student success and overall wellbeing. If SHB151 comes to pass – Ohio's students will be at a severe disadvantage as they compete for increasingly competitive employment opportunities in sectors that require college degrees and advanced training. The **future of our student's economic outlook is at risk.**

- 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.
 - Professors will be forced to not teach subjects related to the issues highlighted in the bill for fear of punishment. How will students compete for employment in an increasingly diverse work environment that requires experience with complex social problems?
 - Ohio public universities will be unable to compete with public universities in Michigan and Pennsylvania, for example, which will continue to offer world-class education to their students while we limit what our students can and can't be taught based on state mandated teaching protocols. **These universities are already trying to entice Ohio student to attend their campuses.**
 - How will this bill attract the best and brightest scholars to join Ohio public universities? The guidelines for what can and can't be taught and the punishments thereof are not going to be helpful for recruiting future faculty. This is bad for our students, bad for institutions of higher learning, and bad for Ohio.

If you want to make sure our Ohio residents to have access to a World-Class Education, 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 leave our students with hard choices including the question of whether to stay in Ohio or not.

Dr. Robert L. Peralta