

Testimony of Erica Eckert, Ph.D.
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
May 16, 2023

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

My name is Erica Eckert, and I am an assistant professor of Higher Education Administration at Kent State University, where I have taught for 11 years. I do not represent Kent State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Substitute House Bill 151.

I applaud you for your attention to higher education and am happy that you want to improve it. I have worked for more than a decade in assessment and quality assurance within higher education and the concerns I have with this bill are numerous. The regulatory burden of reporting is substantial but will be unlikely to lead to the significant improvements you seek. The Ohio Department of Higher Education is not appropriately staffed to provide the accountability you seek.

Further, the chilling of free speech and organization rights of faculty will make it less likely that we recruit and retain the talented faculty Kent State University and the rest of Ohio relies upon through the economic and research development such an institution can provide.

Finally, it communicates to students from minoritized backgrounds that despite any challenges they have faced outside of their control, they will be treated as if they did not have those experiences. I find this incredibly disappointing and counter-productive. DEI is not a threat to white people. It is simply putting into practice the ideas that we need to take care of *everyone* intentionally. Thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Eckert