

To Whom It May Concern:

HB 151 is yet another sweeping attempt by Ohio legislators to mimic the worst impulses of the Florida government by importing extremist gag orders intended to DESTROY, not ENHANCE higher education. This attack on academic freedom can harm students, cause irreversible damage to our institutions of higher education, and devastate Ohio. House Bill 151, and its companion bill Senate Bill 83, are an affront to all who believe in honest, inclusive education and Ohio's future.

HB 151 is bad for students. It claims to promote intellectual diversity while simultaneously dictating the content and manner in which certain topics can be discussed. It would ban the types of training that ensure all students, no matter their backgrounds, can succeed.

Rather than cultivating learning environments that help students understand complicated aspects of our shared history, uncomfortable truths, and complex systems of power, HB 151 whitewashes history, sanitizes the truth, and reduces lived experiences around race and identity to "controversial beliefs and policies".

HB 151 is bad for higher education. The bill restricts instruction in diversity, equity, and inclusion in public and private colleges and universities; prohibits public colleges and universities from speaking out on important issues and forces them to turn campuses into safe spaces for hate speech; and prohibits faculty and staff at public colleges and universities from striking, taking away a powerful tool to advocate for themselves and their students.

Onerous administrative mandates in this bill will ensure that more of Ohio's higher education funding goes to bureaucratic compliance and less goes to academic programs. The legislative micromangement of academic programs will also make it harder for Ohio's public universities to compete with those in neighboring states.

HB 151 is bad for Ohio. The untenable mandates in this bill would shift money, time, and attention from student learning to bureaucracy. It would make it harder to attract students and faculty to Ohio institutions of higher learning, and in the long run, Ohio will become even less competitive economically.

Please vote against this bill.

Sincerely,
Namiko Kunimoto, Director, Ohio State University