

Testimony of Jan Nesor, PhD
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Rep Tom Young, Chair
May 16, 2023

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

My name is Jan Nesor, and I am a professor of Education Policy at the Ohio State University. I do not represent the university. Rather, I am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to HB151.

HB151 (and its Senate version, SB83) is one of a set of proposed bills this term (e.g., SB1, SB17, HB1, HB11/SB11, HB103) that would hobble public education in Ohio from kindergarten to university level: collectively they undermine democratic control of schools, gut funding, promote privatization, and in the case of HB151 attempt to transform the university into a machine for content delivery instead of a space for exploring new ideas, making new connections, and developing innovative ideas.

As part of this effort HB151 attempts to limit what university faculty can teach and how they can teach. It would undermine challenging curricula, suppress political expression, disrupt research practice, and destabilize working conditions and the rights of faculty members and staff. It would shift money from instruction to administration and expand an already overly-robust bureaucracy. Many of these things, of course, are happening around the US¹. In more physically violent versions they are also being undertaken by authoritarian and fascist regimes around the world.²

The negative consequences of these efforts will unfold over many years. In the short run state universities will lose status, their ability to attract top faculty members and students, and access to key streams of funding. The longer term implications are more uncertain but perhaps more dire. Critical issues will be excluded or marginalized in curricula for fear of attracting sanctions, producing graduates less able to understand and respond to fast-changing political, economic, and environment contexts. Students' understanding of the scientific consensus on key topics will be undermined by mechanical requirements for 'diversity.'

Whatever short-term political advantage one might gain from supporting HB151 is more than outweighed by the harm such legislation will do. I urge you to vote 'no' on HB151.

Sincerely,

Jan Nesor

¹ <https://www-chronicle-com.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts>

² For example: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/free-to-think-2022/>
<https://eua2022.protectingeducation.org/#title>