

Testimony of Yuko Kurahashi, Ph.D.
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:

My name is Yuko Kurahashi and I am a professor of theatre at Kent State University where I have taught for 22 years. I do not represent KSU but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to HB 151 and also SB83.

I am a professor of theatre at Kent State University, School of Theatre and Dance. I am a member of AAUP-KSU. And I am the President of the KSU Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander Faculty and Staff Alliance. Most importantly, I am the only daughter of a 93-year-old Japanese woman, who is living in Tokyo. My mother was born in 1929 and lived through the time of Japanese Imperialism that denied people's rights to know, study, and think differently from the authoritarian regime. I am the first generation of modern democratic Japan.

Since I landed in this country in 1987 as an international graduate student, I have gained so much knowledge and learned how to digest it critically and intellectually with compassion and empathy.

I came here with little knowledge of US history and world history. I knew only about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and Lorraine Hansberry when it comes to the Civil Rights Movement.

Now, I teach Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, Toni Morrison, Maja Angelou, and Joy Harjo. Through plays and productions, I teach the Trail of Tears, the colonization and decolonization of the Congo, Zimbabwe, and Libya. My students and I study Phillis Wheatley and Harriet Tubman.

I learned about my own people, too—almost forgotten people in Japan—those who were sent to Internment Camps.

I am not standing here if my education was done at the institutions controlled and muzzled by such bills as HB 151 and similar bills, because what I took in could be all considered “divisive.”

This bill, along with other anti-woke and diversity bills, would prevent students from engaging, safely, in discussions to make our lives and society in align with true democracy HB151 will trigger chilling effects on not only current and future generations but also on the economy of this state, since people—from here and abroad alike—stop coming. For this reason, I strongly oppose this bill and respectfully ask you to withdraw it.

Yuko Kurahashi