

Members of the Ohio House of Representatives -

SB 83 mandates “a range of disciplinary sanctions” for including certain concepts in trainings in Ohio public institutions of higher education (line 1298). That being the case, **state senator Jerry Cirino is being flat out dishonest about SB 83 / HB 151**. He has publicly stated that **“there is no subject matter that is barred from being discussed. I don’t know where people are getting that from this bill.”** In the May 24 House Higher Education Committee hearing he said that “The First Amendment is alive and well and reinforced in this bill. All we ask is for balance and no indoctrination” and that diversity training would not be banned under the bill, but would have to be optional.

These statements are simply untrue – and a quick review of the language of the bill makes that absolutely clear. Beginning in line 1270 of the version of the bill passed by the Ohio Senate, we have language that states the following (emphasis mine):

(C) **No state institution of higher education shall provide** or require training for any administrator, teacher, staff member, or employee that advocates or promotes any of the following concepts:

The listed concepts include prohibitions that impact training on implicit bias, affirmative action, racial trauma, white privilege, white fragility, and structural racism, all of which are frequently discussed in diversity training. Moreover, line 1298 states that “Each state institution of higher education shall implement a range of **disciplinary sanctions** for any administrator, teacher, staff member, or employee who authorizes or engages in a training prohibited in division (C) of this section.” **Why would there need to be “a range of disciplinary sanctions” if, as Senator Cirino states, there is “no subject matter that is barred from being discussed”?**

Whether or not you agree with the concepts listed above, you must concede that contrary to Senator Cirino’s claims, there is in fact subject matter that is barred from being discussed by the bill. **The question is not whether you personally agree with the banned concepts – the question is whether whether it is inappropriate and un-American to ban these ideas simply because legislators disagree with them.**

It is patently dishonest to claim that there is “no subject matter that is barred from being discussed” and that diversity training merely must be optional, **when right there in the bill there is plainly language that not only prohibits some concepts from being part of “provided” training, but also requires penalties for those who include them in trainings.** Again, why would there be penalties if nothing is barred from being discussed?

White supremacists, bigots, and racists cheer whenever laws against Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are passed. Does the state of Ohio really want to be on the same side as them when it comes to DEI? Besides making people who wear white hoods happy, House Bill 151’s prohibition that “no state institution shall train any administrator, teacher, staff member, or employee to adopt or believe in” many topics that are often discussed in DEI trainings **will make it considerably less likely that many employees at Ohio institutions of higher education will be able to understand the perspectives of people who have had different experiences than they have had.** DEI training has made me a more understanding, compassionate person, one who is more committed to fighting racism, both in myself and in others. Why would anyone want to take that away from higher education in Ohio? And why do

some legislators think it is appropriate to ban training on DEI concepts? How is this not an educational gag order?

Please think about the message that is sent when legislators attack DEI efforts – **many people of color feel that their histories, perspectives, and experiences are being dismissed when DEI is attacked.** Because one purpose of DEI is to give voice to the perspectives of those who have traditionally been oppressed and marginalized, for many people of color it feels as though they are being dismissed and marginalized all over again when DEI is targeted. As legislators, you should be deeply concerned about how your actions impact many of your constituents of color.

Finally, it is **simply un-American** for elected representatives to tell us as constituents that we can't talk about race in certain ways at colleges and universities, that we can't express certain ideas in trainings, that we can't promote certain values simply because some politicians disagree with them. **There are few things more un-American than politicians using legislative power to silence ideas they disagree with,** particularly when those ideas relate to an appreciation of the diversity of, a focus on ensuring equitable opportunities for, and a recognition of the importance of including ALL Ohioans.

Vote no on SB 83 / HB 151 – Senator Cirino may disingenuously claim no ideas are being prohibited, but that is clearly an untruth when you examine the actual wording of his bill. Besides, legislating against ideas politicians happen to disagree with is not what we do here in America.

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