

# WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: Nov. 12, 2023

Name: Pierluigi Bonello

Are you representing: Self

Organization (If Applicable): N/A

Position/Title:

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Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? No

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): SB 83

Specific Issue: Invited speakers and controversial issues

Are you testifying as a: Opponent

Will you have a written statement? Yes

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? None, written only.

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

*Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.*

Testimony of Pierluigi Bonello, Ph.D.  
Before the House Higher Education Committee  
Rep. Tom Young, Chair  
Nov. 15, 2023

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

My name is Enrico Bonello, and I am a professor of Plant Pathology at The Ohio State University, where I have taught for close to 24 years and do research on issues related to forest health, particularly under the effects of climate change, which is an eminently non-controversial topic (and not a “belief” or “policy,” as defined in the bill) among specialists like me, i.e. people who know what they talk about. I do not represent The Ohio State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in strong opposition to Senate Bill 83.

The bill as written is a set of solutions in search of non-existing problems. None of the “issues” the bill purports to correct actually exist in real life. Due to time constraints, I cannot address all of them. So I will confine myself to aspects of the bill that “Affirm and declare that the institution will seek out invited speakers who have diverse ideological or political views,” and that “Affirm and declare that faculty and staff shall allow and encourage students to reach their own conclusions about all controversial beliefs or policies and shall not seek to indoctrinate any social, political, or religious point of view,” where ““Controversial belief or policy” means any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion.” I have been at different premiere institutions in the US for almost 30 years, and no institution I have been a part of has ever “forbidden,” by *fiat*, any point of view or any speaker from speaking on campus. Therefore, in the absence of irrefutable evidence, I submit to you that this is a malicious lie meant to foment division where no division exists.

I suspect that what the original sponsor, Sen. Cirino, has in mind is that so-called conservative voices are sometimes not welcome by university “communities.” This, of course, is different from being “prevented” to talk by the institution itself, which, as I said, does not occur. Instead, Mr. Cirino seeks to FORCE certain viewpoints even when they are not welcome. So a better question may be: Why are certain viewpoints not welcome, for example when such viewpoints claim that climate change is simply a hoax or that global warming is a thing but is not caused by humans and therefore there is no need for any changes in policy?

Let me try to answer that question. Universities are by design a place for free inquiry using sophisticated thinking based on empirical evidence. Whether it is the hard sciences, or the humanities, faculty and students are trained to use the logic of induction and deduction, based on empirical evidence, to come to their own conclusions. For this reason, the vast majority of faculty and students on campuses across the

nation do not welcome certain messages expounded by certain so-called conservatives. Mind you, it's not that the speakers are "prevented" by the institutions themselves to speak on campus. You simply cannot force communities of learners, as you find on university campuses, to accept viewpoints that do not conform with the logic of induction and deduction based on empirical evidence. Many of the so-called conservative viewpoints Sen. Cirino wants to force on campus are simply nonsensical, fact-free "thinking", or beliefs with respect to science or any other field of knowledge, i.e. they do not conform with rigorous inductive and deductive thinking. Of course, one can still express nonsense, as allowed by the first amendment, but that person cannot expect to be paid attention to. Does that mean there is no intellectual diversity on campuses across the Nation? Of course not.

This is just a smidgen of the reasons this bill is so bad for Ohio. It's based on falsity surrounding non-existing problems and is designed to divide. The bill is simply a dog whistle to try and capture votes, not honest discourse.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this extremely harmful and dangerous bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.