

**Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 83  
House Committee on Higher Education  
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Resident of Mason, Ohio**

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

When I moved to Ohio from New York City in 2020, the Midwest was new to me. I grew up in New England and the longest I'd lived anywhere was in Manhattan. I went to New York University and then to Columbia University. I started to think that everything that mattered in America happened on the East Coast. When I moved to Mason, I wasn't sure what to expect. But here's what I definitely didn't expect: I quickly fell in love. Here was a place where people were ambitious and friendly. Where they respected difference and still lived in community.

Where they valued family and they valued independence. What I found resonated with me on so many levels. In fact, when I reconnected with an old friend recently, one who'd lived in Washington, DC, for years, I swore to him that Ohio was the future. He looked at me like I'd lost my mind, but once I explained why, when I shared the amazing things that were happening in Ohio, he had to pause. Maybe, he said, I was wrong about the Midwest. It's not that we had figured out all our problems, I continued, but we had a combination of enthusiasm, confidence, and direction that was infectious. And necessary for a place to grow in good ways.

We know this is true, of course. So many people are moving to places like Ohio. So many people are building lives here. And the attraction is contagious. The more people we convince to move here, the more jobs we have, and the more people will come. The more vibrant our congregations are, the more people we'll have investing in kids, in schools, in neighborhoods, in civic life. The more dynamic our universities are, the more we'll bring talent here, money here, energy here. Muslim communities are just one part of that picture, but the part of the picture I know best. We're young, we're invested in continuity, and so we're committed to Ohio's future.

Which is why, when I first came across SB83, I was shocked. Was Ohio really going to target religious freedom? Were we going to penalize faith commitments—I mean, isn't that what America's about, where we have the right to pursue happiness, and worship God, as we deem best, and isn't that freedom what makes our country so unique and so remarkable? SB83 sends a message to young families that Ohio is not the kind of place you want to start a business in, found a congregation in, raise a family in, or send your kid to college in. We should be standing up for what makes Ohio the envy of so many. Not repeating the mistakes of closed societies.

We should be prioritizing what convinced someone who'd never lived in the Midwest that Ohio could be and should be home. I want to live here, build here, and contribute here, and convince others to make a life here, too. SB83 makes that so much harder. It will scare away jobs. It will scare away young professionals. It will scare away research, development, industry, and innovation. SB83 is going to take Ohio in the wrong direction. But we can still correct. We can do what's right for Ohioans of all backgrounds, professions, and ambitions. To keep our state one where we value hard work, strong beliefs, family, community—and the future.