

By denying faculty unions the right to bargain over post-tenure review, evaluation of faculty and most of retrenchment, SB 83 is the worst attack on collective bargaining since SB 5. The proposal also mandates unacceptable and unnecessary policies, and its supporters fundamentally misunderstand higher education in Ohio.

The bill's supporters argue that the draconian cost cutting moves that the unfettered retrenchment language of SB 83 would allow are just a normal part of doing business in the private sector, and universities should work the same way. The layoffs, factory closings and other sharp cost-cutting measures that happen in private industry are in fact failures to run organizations right, and we should try to avoid them at our universities. Retrenchment is the nuclear bomb of reorganization, and a sign of administrative failure. At BGSU there are myriad and ongoing processes for making sure our degree and course offerings match student and employer needs. I'm sure the same is true at other universities. While we are not for-profit entities, we are keenly aware of what potential students and their families need from us, and are constantly making sure we are offering it.

Also, there is no way a for-profit entity could offer what BGSU and other state universities in Ohio do for the cost. We allow access to higher education and a better life for tens of thousands of young people precisely because we are not expected to make a profit. The much appreciated but still too small subsidy we receive from the state of Ohio helps keep the cost lower than it otherwise would be, but we are profoundly tuition dependent. Our slogan at BGSU, "A Public University for the Public Good," is exactly descriptive of the fact that not just the students who directly earn an education from BGSU benefit from it. We all benefit from having a well-educated citizenry and a talented workforce.

Supporters of SB 83 also profoundly misunderstand the nature of faculty life in 2023. I have heard it asserted that professors have never had to fear losing their jobs. This is completely false. Adjunct/part-time faculty essentially lose their jobs every semester as universities decide whether to offer their courses during the next semester. Non-tenure eligible faculty (called Qualified Rank Faculty at BGSU and representing more than a third of the full-time faculty) regularly experience fear of losing their jobs, as part of an increasingly precarious workforce often described as "flexible." Tenure eligible faculty lose their jobs if they fail to earn tenure, and at BGSU we have a process called extraordinary review whereby the ultimate outcome could be de-tenuring and termination. There are no faculty who do not fear losing their jobs.

Also, all faculty are frequently evaluated already. At BGSU, every year we are evaluated for the merit portion of our salary increase. If we wish to be promoted, we are rigorously evaluated by peers and administrators. In order to teach graduate courses we must maintain graduate faculty status, and we are evaluated in order to get and keep it. Then there is the extraordinary review mentioned above, as well as a process to evaluate the fitness for duty of professors who may be performing poorly for reasons outside their control. There is no shortage of evaluation of faculty of all ranks.

Then of course there is the false issue of ideological indoctrination. Faculty spend our time encouraging students to do the readings, participate in class, write quality papers, and perform well on exams. Ideological indoctrination is the furthest thing from our minds.

State universities in Ohio face real problems, such as inadequate state funding and rising student debt. We should all get together and figure out how to make college more accessible for everyone in Ohio, rather than obsessing about the political beliefs of professors, destroying faculty unions, and making it easier for administrators to fire professors.

The opinions expressed in this testimony are those of David J. Jackson, and not his employer.