

Testimony of **Lynette Phillips, PhD, MSPH**
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
November 29, 2023

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

My name is Lynette Phillips, and I am a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at Kent State University, where I have taught for over 13 years. I previously taught at two public and two private universities in North Carolina, Florida, and Ohio, so I bring experience from a variety of higher education institutions. I do not represent Kent State, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Substitute Senate Bill 83.

While I have issues with many of this bill's components, my biggest concern is the seeming lack of understanding in the purpose and goals of higher education behind the crafting of the bill. Specifics may vary slightly, but the consensus among those involved (universities, students, parents, faculty, staff, and the greater community) includes learning general and specific concepts and methods, and developing social and critical thinking skills to obtain a good job and be productive members of society. Our society is vast and varied, and limiting discussions on subjectively worded "controversial beliefs or policies" flies in the face of these goals. Who decides what is controversial? If we don't talk about them, how can we learn from each other and grow as a society? Learning is constantly evolving, and preventing discussions on a topic does not make it go away. In fact, hearing from different viewpoints and newly discovered facts improves our understanding and increases empathy, productive communication, and societal growth. I encourage every member of the Senate to attend a class at an institution of higher learning in this state to truly understand what happens in the classroom and how damaging this bill will be to Ohio citizens and specifically its students.