

Testimony of Nicole M. Karn, PhD  
Before the House Higher Education Committee  
Rep. Tom Young, Chair  
November 26, 2023

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

My name is Nicole Karn, and I am an associated professor of chemistry at The Ohio State University, where I have taught for eight years. I do not represent The Ohio State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Substitute Senate Bill 83 (-11).

Hundreds of university faculty and students have stood before you or submitted written testimony in opposition to each iteration of SB-83 and will continue to do so. There is nothing in this bill that “enhances” higher education and no there are no changes that could be made to this bill that would make it any less concerning to higher education.

There are many aspects of this bill that are disturbing including the unnecessary micromanaging of faculty evaluations and post-tenure review, the banning of striking due to retrenchment, the labeling of certain ideas as “controversial” and restricting the ways in which faculty can freely speak about these topics, and the requirement of faculty to post detailed syllabi which opens them up to potential harassment. Each of these issues affects faculty and students who are currently employed and enrolled at Ohio’s universities. But, of course, it affects future students and faculty as well.

The Chronicle of Higher Education recently ran an article titled “Statehouses’ Targeting of Diversity and Tenure Is Starting to Scare Away Faculty Job Candidates.” In this piece, Andrew Gothard, president of the United Faculty of Florida states that highly qualified candidates are turning down job offers in Florida because of a similar bill in Florida. Many people are reconsidering job offers there. Further, an unknown number of people do not apply to jobs in Florida due to their anti-DEI and tenure bills. In Texas, applications for open jobs are down and applicants frequently ask how anti-DEI and tenure bills will affect them. Qualified applicants are hesitant or do not even apply for open jobs in those states. Do you want the same for Ohio? Clearly, a diminished pool of qualified applicants does not “enhance” Ohio universities. It is for this reason and the ones aforementioned that I urge you to vote no on SB83.

Reference:

Megan Zahneis, Statehouses' Targeting of Diversity and Tenure Is Starting to Scare Away Faculty Job Candidates, The Chronicle of Higher Education, May 5, 2023