



The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

**Ohio House Higher Education Committee
Scott DiMauro – President, Ohio Education Association
Substitute Senate Bill 83 Opponent Testimony
November 29, 2023**

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee, my name is Scott DiMauro. I am a high school social studies teacher from Worthington with 16 years of classroom teaching experience and currently serve as President of the Ohio Education Association. On behalf of approximately 1,400 higher education members from both four- and two- year colleges and universities, thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony to express our unequivocal opposition to Substitute Senate Bill 83.

While we are pleased that the latest version of the bill removes the prohibition of faculty and employees to strike, OEA believes the bill remains riddled with fundamental shortcomings as it relates to certain provisions that attack labor rights, job security, and academic freedom. The following outlines our major concerns with the bill.

Prohibition on Collective Bargaining Subjects

Substitute Senate Bill 83 harms workers’ rights by taking away collective bargaining for higher education employees on a range of core working conditions that represent significant terms and conditions of faculty employment. OEA specifically opposes the bill’s prohibitions on collective bargaining regarding faculty evaluation systems, tenure, and retrenchment policies. Further, OEA believes that the definition of retrenchment remains excessively broad and would allow administrators to terminate faculty and shut down academic programs without notice.

Collective bargaining not only benefits unionized employees but our members’ working conditions impact their students’ learning conditions. OEA believes that these topics are best addressed at the local level with institutions determining systems that work for their students, faculty, and campuses and request these provisions be removed from the bill.

Academic Freedom

Substitute Senate Bill 83 contains unclear language regarding “intellectual diversity” and dictates the content and manner in which certain topics can be discussed. Through adopted local policies, Ohio’s public colleges and universities currently have a strong commitment to protecting freedom of speech that



creates an academic environment of open discourse and rigorous inquiry. Differing viewpoints are encouraged, not silenced. Exposure to differing viewpoints serves an important role in educating students. The process of evaluating varied viewpoints and making judgments on the merits of these differing views provides students the training necessary to excel in employment opportunities after graduation. OEA believes that the bill's provisions are unnecessary and will only serve to suffocate authentic classroom conversations, stunt student learning, and detract from the readiness of students to enter the workforce.

To grow our economy and keep our system of higher education strong, Ohio must do all it can to attract and retain qualified and committed faculty in all academic disciplines. The bill instead sends an unmistakable message to talented individuals looking to advance their careers: go somewhere else.

In conclusion, this bill does not address issues specific to Ohio but instead represents a broader national effort to attack higher education. OEA opposes Substitute Senate Bill 83 as it is unnecessary and will harm higher education students, colleges and universities, and Ohio's workforce and economy. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact me with any questions.