



**Opponent Testimony of Rachael Collyer, Ohio Student Association  
Senate Bill 83  
House Higher Education Committee  
November 29th, 2023**

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Rachael Collyer, and in addition to being a lifelong Ohio resident and a graduate of the Ohio State University (OSU), I am the program director of the Ohio Student Association (OSA), which I've been involved with for 11 years now, starting as a sophomore at Ohio State. OSA is a statewide grassroots organization with student-led chapters at twelve college campuses across the state and growing, bringing together young Ohioans from different backgrounds and with different experiences to imagine and fight for a better future for ALL Ohioans.

I presented opponent testimony regarding SB 83 in May, and the primary concerns and threats embedded in SB 83 that I named then still remain. The passing of SB 83 would be a fundamental and disastrous transformation in Ohio higher education that would harm students, universities, and our entire state.

SB83 does a grave disservice to students by restricting Diversity, Equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs, even ones with a strong track record of supporting underserved populations—lowering barriers and extending bridges in higher education. It is critical for the future of our state that we have high-performing and competitive universities that set students up to succeed and draw more young people to move to or stay in Ohio. For that to be possible, we must have diverse opinions and backgrounds represented in the classroom, and we cannot impose censorship on education. Intellectual diversity should not, and in fact cannot, come at the cost of academic freedom and critical thinking.

SB 83 would hamstring academic integrity and would create environments that would empower bigotry, pseudoscience, and reactionary fanaticism. Specifically, the bill states that students must be allowed to come to their own conclusions for any and “all controversial beliefs or policies,” regardless of the science, ethics, and evidence at hand.<sup>1</sup> This could look like teaching ‘both sides’ of slavery, bringing validation to antiquated arguments for discriminatory policies, allowing for the selective rejection of climate change science, and even Holocaust denial. We can have critical and

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<sup>1</sup>Starting on Line 767, Senate Bill 83 - Version 11

challenging conversations without mandating an anti-science and moral relativistic banner that could upend essential course discussions and endanger education itself.

SB 83 is a deeply disturbing instance of government overreach. The bill encompasses micromanaging faculty evaluations—already maintained and curated by universities—and dumbing down American government courses—quite literally repeating several of Ohio’s Social Science Standards.

Even after removing the ban on strikes in SB 83 Version 11, the language used around “retrenchment” creates an open-ended loophole that similarly restricts the ability of university staff to collectively bargain, and even potentially invalidates hard-sought protections. For this reason, it has been called a *de facto* elimination of tenure protections and job security by labor organizations.

We cannot afford to make education more restrictive and less supportive to our students. What young person would want to get their education in a state where education is censored? Where diversity, equity, and inclusion are not valued? This bill would put Ohio’s students at a disadvantage by censoring important topics and dismantling critical programs used to support the student body so that all students can thrive, regardless of income or race.

At every stage, this bill has been hugely unpopular among students. Ohio students helped pack the statehouse in May while presenting opponent testimony, led a number of statehouse and campus-level rallies including a mock funeral for higher education in June, attended the trustees’ symposium in October, and organized phone-banking and numerous legislator meetings leading up to this very hearing. Witnessing first-hand the different concerns coming from young Ohioans with a direct stake in this matter, and hearing what they have to say about SB 83, it is with confidence that I can say that SB 83 is not nor has ever been in line with the interests of actual Ohio students.

This bill is contradictory to our values as an organization and as Ohioans. On behalf of all of the members of the Ohio Student Association, we urge committee members and legislators to prioritize student interests and vote no on this bill before it can harm our institutions and our future as a state.

Thank you.