



House Higher Education Committee
Proponent Testimony: SB 83

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Chairman Young, Vice Chair Manning, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this legislation.

SB 83 offers to significantly improve the academic environment of Ohio’s public institutions of higher education for students and faculty alike.

Among its provisions, the legislation will ensure that students can easily access course syllabi when making enrollment decisions. Providing such transparency is already an established best practice among faculty at public universities,¹ and the posting of this information online promotes far greater alignment between the expectations of students and instructors regarding the actual substance to be covered in a specific class.

Second, and even more significantly, SB 83 will enact a series of reforms to strengthen the academic integrity of Ohio’s universities by promoting intellectual diversity. By prohibiting mandatory orientations and trainings related to “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (DEI), this legislation will ensure that student and faculty time is not diverted to politically charged, racially divisive programming. Rather, the legislation directs the institutions to practice neutrality regarding issues of public debate, ensuring that students and faculty are free from undue pressure to adopt a particular policy position in class or on campus.

Likewise, by prohibiting the institutions’ use of any “political litmus test”— including so-called “diversity statements”—to evaluate current or prospective students, faculty, or staff, SB 83 will end a corrosive practice currently undermining intellectual diversity on campus. Already, state lawmakers and/or boards of regents in several states, including North Carolina, Iowa, Arizona, Texas, and Florida, have recently abolished the use of diversity statements.² A substantial and increasing body of evidence

¹ See, for example: State and Local Government Syllabus, Arizona State University: <https://webapp4.asu.edu/bookstore/viewsyllabus/2207/88708>

² “AZ Universities Drop Use of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statements in Job Applications.” Arizona Republic. August 8, 2023. <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/arizona-education/2023/08/08/asu-ua-nau-drop-use-of-diversity-statements-in-university-job-applications/70554093007/>; “Dropping DEI in Texas Schools.” Wall Street Journal. June 4, 2023. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/dropping-dei-in-texas-schools-diversity-equity-inclusion-college-university-students-fe537faa>; “University of North Carolina System Drops DEI Hiring Requirement amid Growing Backlash.” National Review. February 25, 2023. <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/unc-chapel-hill-drops-dei-hiring-requirement-amid-growing-backlash/>; “No More Mandatory Pronouns: Iowa Regents Vote to Curb University DEI Programs.” National Review. November 20, 2023. <https://www.nationalreview.com/news/no-more-mandatory-pronouns-iowa-regents-vote-to-curb-university-dei-programs/>

has revealed that these DEI statements function as an ideological screening mechanism—one that exacerbates an already severe imbalance in the ideological mix of university staff.³

Despite being presented to students as a movement that promotes opportunity for those of all backgrounds, the DEI programming currently propagated in academic institutions has been associated with *worsened* campus climates⁴ and has been repeatedly linked to political activism including the “decolonization” movement, which has advocated for or condoned political violence, including, most recently, the October 7th terrorist attacks in Israel.⁵ It is entirely inappropriate for state institutions to promote, much less *require*, assent to any ideology associated with such beliefs or causes.

SB 83 also offers to strengthen the caliber of instruction provided to students by ensuring a foundational introduction to American institutions including the Constitution and Declaration of Independence. Taken alongside the other reforms in this legislation, such provisions will help ensure that graduates of the state’s public universities are equipped with knowledge, awareness, and appreciation of the founding pillars of the American republic.

I strongly encourage you to support this legislation.

Thank you.

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³ “The New Loyalty Oaths.” Goldwater Institute. January 17, 2023. <https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/policy-report/the-new-loyalty-oaths/>; “Inside Ohio State’s DEI Factory.” John Sailer. Wall Street Journal. November 20, 2023. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/inside-ohio-states-dei-factory-faculty-report-diversity-hiring-cefd804d>

⁴ “At Texas A&M, a Different Kind of ‘Climate Change’: Efforts to Make the Campus More Welcoming have Alienated Students.” Scott Yenor. James G. Martin Center. February 22, 2023. <https://www.jamesgmartin.center/2023/02/at-texas-am-a-different-kind-of-climate-change/>.

⁵ “AZ University Faculty Given Test on ‘Decolonization,’ Pressured to Support Racialized DEI.” Goldwater Institute. November 13, 2023. <https://www.goldwaterinstitute.org/az-university-faculty-given-test-on-decolonization-pressured-to-support-racialized-dei/>