

Emma Vaughn

Testimony

SB83 (against)

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Chairman, vice chair, ranking member and members of the committee;

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. As this is my first time testifying I will start by introducing myself. My name is Emma Vaughn, a first year student at Ohio State studying Political science and Public management leadership and Policy. I am here because I am strongly against SB83.

I chose my degree to make a change in the lives of those who need it, and I believe I can do this well with this degree. However, this bill limits my degree by dictating what students and faculty can discuss in the classroom through abhorrent government overreach. I believe that this is wrong. Academic freedom is the cornerstone of higher education. It encourages innovation, critical thinking, and the pursuit of knowledge. The ability of faculty to explore diverse ideas, question conventional wisdom, and engage students in thought-provoking discussions is central to the advancement of education and society. This improves our schools' reputation and credibility. Innovation often emerges from the crucible of challenging questions and beliefs. It is through the respectful exchange of diverse perspectives that students are exposed to a broad range of ideas, encouraging them to think critically, develop their own opinions, and contribute meaningfully to our world. Restricting what faculty can say in the classroom not only stifles this intellectual growth but also hampers the innovative spirit that is vital for progress. Which has the greatest potential to drive students and faculty of all fields away from our universities and state as whole.

From my own personal experience I have seen that being confronted with ideas different from your own can make you grow despite it sometimes being uncomfortable. When athletes are training and they feel their muscles tire and their lungs burn they are uncomfortable, but

they grow and some of those athletes will become olympic gold medalists. It is the same way with learning. Our professors do not force us to think a certain way or express certain viewpoints. Instead they give us the information to think critically and make our own opinions. They ask us why we think certain things. The question allows us to make innovations in any field from stem to humanities : why does this event in history relate to modern day or why does this chemical reaction work? I urge you to consider the long-term impact of this bill on the quality of education in Ohio. Instead of restricting the freedom of expression for faculty, let us focus on promoting an environment that values diversity, inclusivity, and open dialogue. These principles are not only essential for academic excellence but also for preparing our students to face the complexities of the world beyond the classroom. SB83 undercuts this process in our classrooms with its senseless policing.

I am asking you to take my testimony into consideration and vote no on this bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am now open to questions.