

Testimony of Martin Ponce, Ph.D.
Before the House Higher Education Committee

Rep. Tom Young, Chair

November 28, 2023

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

My name is Martin Ponce, and I am an associate professor of English at The Ohio State University where I have taught for 18 years. I do not represent OSU, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Substitute Senate Bill 83.

I am deeply concerned about SB 83 and ask that you do not support this legislation for several reasons: 1) its requirement of making course syllabi public will create a culture of surveillance and have a chilling effect on free speech and academic freedom; 2) its language and policies on DEI and “intellectual diversity” misleadingly imply that Ohio colleges and universities are “indoctrinating” students with certain ideas and beliefs, which is the exact opposite of what is actually happening on campuses; 3) its post-tenure review provision again threatens academic freedom and will deter tenured faculty from pursuing innovative research that moves beyond the status quo; 4) its language on retrenchment is vague, facilitating the possibility that academic programs could be shuttered for political reasons; 5) and, more generally, the bill transfers the responsibility and oversight of educating Ohio’s students from educators to politicians, thus expanding the mechanisms for interference and micromanagement from external actors who are unfamiliar with conditions on the ground.

Respectfully, I ask that you reject this bill, which could do real, irreversible damage to Ohio higher education.

Sincerely,

Martin Ponce, Ph.D.