

Testimony by: Jill Galvan  
To: House Higher Education Committee  
Rep. Tom Young, Chair  
November 29, 2023

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

Thank you very much for hearing my testimony today. Ohio has been my home for a long time. I'm a faculty member at Ohio State, but speaking today as a private citizen. I'm here to oppose SB83—not only as a wrong move for colleges, but as a wrong move for Ohio.

My testimony—and that of other opponents today—builds on the over 500 opponent testimonies in the bill at the hearing earlier this year, in April. That is an extraordinary number. Moreover, people from all over the community came out to testify, including religious leaders and community organizations and leaders. Labor leaders are also strongly against this bill. The current version of SB83, the 11<sup>th</sup> one, takes out previous anti-strike language. Nonetheless, SB83 still tramples on the rights of workers, because it strictly limits what college and university employees can collectively bargain about, by prohibiting certain topics. Collective bargaining means nothing when you take out whole topics, like job security, how performance is evaluated, and the conditions of work off the table. People who fight for workers' rights across Ohio know this very well.

Over the past year, I've been trying to figure out who this bill actually serves. Who profits? There have been many claims that higher education is a funnel that tries to pour thought into the heads of students, aggressively. This demonstrates a deep lack of understanding of what goes on in a classroom; it's a false narrative. But another problem with this narrative is that it's been a distraction. There has been practically no discussion of one of college's main roles: to prepare students for jobs—for the expertise, complex thinking, and skills that employers want. Make no mistake about it: SB83 would degrade education. It would make classrooms places where people, faculty and students, can't talk fully about knowledge and facts. In turn, this would underprepare students for a competitive workforce, which requires this level of critical thinking and knowledge-building. Even SB83's anti-DEI provisions are profoundly out-of-step with employers' needs, because they don't acknowledge how diverse the population is, including here in Ohio, and in turn how diverse workplaces are. Strong college graduates go to work knowing how to be leaders, partners, collaborators. But SB83 treats diversity as a point of fear. If this bill passes, it will undermine graduates' skills with working cross different perspectives.

Additionally, if SB83 passed, I have no doubt that it will drive students away from our state. Ohio will start to get a reputation—for censorship, and as closed-door in its attitude, an unwelcoming state. A major fact today is that colleges are immensely competitive with one another for students. And colleges compete with each other not just within states, but *across* states: there's a huge attempt to grab other states' students. Colleges start courting high school students in the *10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> grade*. So, if a student doesn't like what Ohio has to offer, they have plenty of other places to choose from. Who cares if our students go elsewhere? We should care

because college graduates continue to be, besides thoughtful members of communities, high-earning citizens. Their loss is a loss to Ohio's economic health.

Lastly, if this bill passes, faculty of all kinds—engineers, business profs, historians, art historians, medical practitioners, urban planners, language specialists, humanists—will be much less likely to come to Ohio. And faculty who work here now will leave. In fact, that drain is already happening, in places enacting laws and policies like SB83.<sup>1</sup> If you pass a bill that says to a potential faculty hire: we will surveille your courses, and allow for easy doxing of you, by forcing you to post work information and classroom plans; we don't believe you can be trusted to determine the best programs, so we're going to eliminate that issue from collective bargaining; you're an expert in your field, but we're going to control what you can teach by calling certain topics "controversial"... Why would anyone want to come work here? This would have major consequences for our state. Besides the fact that the state would be robbed of a lot of expertise—there are economic realities. If colleges can't attract good faculty, that puts those institutions themselves in jeopardy. And that matters, because colleges are major financial engines. Within communities all across Ohio, they function like other large-scale employers to create many, many jobs. Additionally, the hope is always that college graduates will stay in the area where they went to college, giving back and contributing to the community. If colleges fail, that's not good for Ohio. It's a recipe for communities that take a turn for the worse.

I urge you look at the big picture. There's a reason people aren't supporting this bill. It would do a lot of damage, with no return.

Thank you for your time.

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<sup>1</sup> ["Florida Universities Hit by Brain Drain as Academics Flee."](#)