

Testimony of Michelle D. Boone, Ph.D.
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
29 November 2023

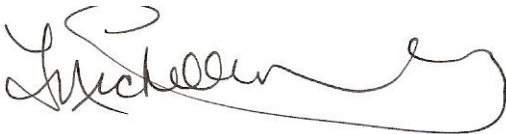
Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Michelle Boone, and I am a professor of Biology at Miami University, where I have taught for 19 years. I am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Substitute Senate Bill 83. I am very concerned how higher education is compromised and politicized by SB 83.

Our state universities strive to hire experts in the field who can train the next generation of students. Political interference in the educational process will make it challenging to recruit the best scholars and will impede our ability to be leaders in higher education. Because of cuts to higher education by the state legislature, the cost of tuition has skyrocketed for students and their families. Our salaries and benefits to faculty and graduate students are not competitive with many other states—adding a microscope over every aspect of a faculty member’s job is not going to compensate for other deficiencies in our state funding of higher education.

While many universities are experiencing reduced student acceptances, that will only worsen in places where there is perceived politicalization—it will reduce the attractiveness of the university to a whole group of students, reducing revenues for universities and their ability to contribute to the public good. Reducing efforts to increase the diversity of students in fields where many demographic groups are underrepresented also reduces our ability to solve critical real-world problems—this is particularly true in STEM fields, many of which remain predominantly white and male. Addressing issues of human disease treatment and cures, developing new technologies, and solving environmental problems will require all hands-on deck—the state bill undermines our ability to do this. And while I believe that *is* in fact the goal, to reduce diversity, it is antithetical to solving important human problems efficiently.

Support higher education and you can make Ohio universities the envy of the country. Politicize it and students (and their tuition dollars), technology, and experts will seek out higher ground.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Boone". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michelle D. Boone, Ph.D.

Oxford, OH