

My name is Julie Buonaiuto and I serve as the Undergraduate Student Body President at Kent State University, which falls in Representative Pavliga's District. I was elected to represent the interests of a constituency of 20,000 students at the third largest higher education institution in the state of Ohio.

I am incredibly proud to go to Kent State. Kent State University is an institution **BUILT** on student advocacy and freedom of speech. Our student body has had an incredible history of speaking up for what is right, and I'm gonna start by telling you a little bit about that history.

In 1969, the Black United Students at Kent State University advocated for the entire month of February to be commemorated as Black History Month. In February of 1970, the first observance of Black History Month took place at Kent State University. Six Years Later, President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month.

On May 4th, 1970, hundreds of students gathered in the Commons to protest Nixon's expansion of the Vietnam War and the National Guard's presence on campus. That day, four students were killed and nine injured for expressing their freedom of speech.

On April 12th, 2023, The Undergraduate Student Government, representing over 20,000 undergraduate students, **UNANIMOUSLY** passed a resolution to condemn Senate Bill 83.

On May 4th, 2023, students gathered at Oscar Ritchie Hall to protest against Senate Bill 83. This served as a poignant reminder of the importance and the deep-rooted history of student advocacy on our campus.

That brings us to today.

Today, I am here, the Student Body President at Kent State University, to urge you to carefully consider the unintended consequences of this bill.

First of all, I'd like to discuss the most pressing issue I and my fellow students see with this bill – the elimination of required Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion trainings or coursework and the lack of freedom of speech for students and professors.

As a senior at Kent State, I have never in my seven semesters felt indoctrinated or influenced politically by a professor or faculty member at the university. When discussing "divisive topics", I have only ever felt like I was free to form my own opinions. The times my professors have weighed in, their contributions only added much needed perspective and gave me an opportunity to consider another lens.

I want to specifically talk about the "equity" and "inclusion" part of DEI for a moment.

At 19, I was diagnosed with Attention Defecit Hyperactivity Disorder, better known as ADHD. Having a learning disability has affected every part of my life, more specifically, education, for

years. Once diagnosed, I realized the many ways in which the education system is inaccessible for students with disabilities and made it my mission to start to change that.

One thing I believe would make a monumental difference in the lives of students with disabilities is a mandatory training for all professors on how to properly give students accommodations, what bias against students with disabilities looks like, and how to create an inclusive classroom environment for students like myself. This bill would prevent something like this from existing in the state of Ohio, something that would better the lives of thousands of students.

I'd also like to discuss the portion regarding faculty evaluations. I am deeply concerned at the potential ramifications of these changes. I personally fear that students will give low ratings on faculty evaluations or say that they perceived bias from the instructor because they were given a low grade in the course or simply did not like the professor.

The bill also prohibits bias in the classroom, and prohibits giving any student or employee an advantage or disadvantage due to race, gender, gender identity, etc. I must ask you to consider — how do you plan to train professors and administrators not to have this bias? Under this bill, a required training of this kind would be considered a training on DEI, therefore banned by the state of Ohio.

Overall, I believe that the intended and unintended consequences of passing this bill are far too great. I believe that this would have a negative impact on not only Kent State University students, but students at every higher education institution in Ohio.

As I wrap up, I'd like to thank Representative Pavliga for her careful consideration of SB83 up to this point, and say that I hope she chooses to continue to do so again today. Thank you all for listening.