

Chairman Young and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to express my concerns regarding the Higher Education Enhancement Act. My name is Celine Rajoulh, and I am a second-year medical student deeply invested in the future of medical education and healthcare in Ohio.

While the intention behind this legislation may be framed as safeguarding free speech, it becomes evident upon closer examination that its impact extends far beyond its purported goal. This bill, rather than fostering an environment conducive to open dialogue, **will restrict our ability to have difficult dialogues with ourselves, with our colleagues, and with our patients.**

One of the most pressing issues with the current bill is its lack of clarity in defining what constitutes a "controversial" or "political" topic. This ambiguity not only raises concerns about potential government overreach but also threatens the essence of medical education itself. Take, for instance, the topic of vaccinations – a crucial component of public health. Under the proposed legislation, discussions on vaccinations could be labeled as controversial, **leading to the absurd requirement of teaching anti-vaccination rhetoric alongside scientifically-supported medical practices.**

The repercussions of such a misguided approach are severe and far-reaching. It undermines the integrity of medical education, jeopardizes patient safety, and adds to the strain on our already overwhelmed healthcare system. As a medical student, I cannot overlook the profound impact this bill may have on the quality of education in Ohio and the broader implications it holds for medical practice nationally.

The medical field is far more than just scientific facts and clinical procedures; it involves the deeply personal, emotional, and vulnerable aspects of patient care that require nuance and compassion. **To become truly empathetic and capable physicians, it is crucial for us to receive exposure to different perspectives that shape our understanding of patients' lives and cultural contexts, allowing us to provide better healthcare to our diverse communities.** The National Medical Association's research attests to the positive impact of diversity within the healthcare sector on team effectiveness and patient outcomes. Representation matters, as evidenced by the significant reduction in disparities when patients are cared for by physicians who share their background.

My commitment to diversity is not driven by political agendas but by a genuine desire to create an environment where patients can seek care without fear of judgment. The prospect of visiting a doctor's office is already intimidating – now imagine the added anxiety of dealing with a medical team that is completely out of touch with your background and experiences. Representation is not just a concept; it is a cornerstone of effective and compassionate healthcare.

The Higher Education Enhancement Act deprives aspiring doctors of a skill that's paramount for their future practice, while also robbing patients of having doctors that speak their language.

It is imperative that we recognize the overreach of this legislation and take decisive action to protect the future of medical education and, consequently, the well-being of our patients.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

Celine Rajoulh