



Dear Chairman Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and esteemed members of the House Higher Education Committee:

The Board of Public Education Partners is opposed to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House-HB 151. Public education advocates have seen more than their share of egregious legislation targeting K-12 public-school districts that serve most of Ohio's children and families, but now it appears that legislators have turned their sights on higher education as well.

Some of those same legislators promote extreme K-12 education policies with the claim that Ohio must strengthen its "workforce," yet many college students have vowed to leave Ohio upon graduation because of the current policy initiatives of the legislative majority. The best way to make sure we have enough young people to fill Ohio jobs is to put a stop to this extremism.

It's been said by Sen. Cirino that some changes were made "after input of a variety of interested parties and voices on some of the general concerns." While we may appreciate the effort, this bill is still deeply flawed.

Unfortunately, whenever an extreme law is introduced, and then nominal changes make it less extreme, it still ends up being an extreme law. This happens often with the Ohio Legislature.

What do the experts say? The Ohio Conference American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which represents approximately 6,000 college and university professors at both public and private institutions of higher education across the State of Ohio, states that Sub. HB 83 represents vast government overreach that undermines academic freedom, workers' rights, and institutional autonomy. According to AAUP, while the new bill draft makes a few steps in the right direction, it still is unyielding on threats to academic freedom, faculty job security, and union rights. The de facto elimination of tenure protections and job security makes bargaining over any other matters a much more hazardous proposition, and the de facto elimination of job security eliminates any meaningful academic freedom because it effectively removes meaningful standards for teaching and grading.

Despite multiple attempts to communicate with Sen. Cirino and Rep. Young on this bill, they have failed to engage at all with OCAAUP or the other two major education unions in Ohio—the Ohio Federation of Teachers and Ohio Education Association. Sen. Cirino and Rep. Young are intent on hearing from only those within their echo chambers, and the small changes we have seen from each iteration of the bill to the next have been made begrudgingly because they knew they did not yet have the necessary votes in the House.

Senate Bill 83 is a shameful attempt to micromanage Ohio colleges, universities, and higher education faculty and staff on ideology that is rooted in the politically motivated culture wars.

Most Ohioans would agree that there should be much higher priorities for our elected leaders than culture war issues, which are a distraction from what is really happening and what really needs to be done at the Ohio Statehouse to support both K-12 and higher education in the Buckeye State.

Please vote NO on SB 83, a harmful bill that is the epitome of government overreach.

Thank you for your service!

Jeanne Melvin and the Board of Public Education Partners