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Testimony before the Workforce & Higher Education

Committee of the Ohio Senate

My name is Hal R. Arkes. I've been a faculty member at both Ohio University and Ohio State University from 1972 until 2011. I've been either the department chair or acting chair four different times in three different departments. I'm still very active professionally, primarily within the executive branch of the federal government.

I'm here in support of Senate Bill 83. As a researcher I'm going to present more facts than opinions. The first question I want to address is "What is the problem this bill is trying to solve?" There is a two-part answer to this question. The first part is the overwhelming preponderance of liberals versus conservatives

among university faculty. In English the liberal to conservative ratio is 88 to 3. In the social sciences it is 75-9. In humanities it is 81 to 9. In political science it is 81-2. These lopsided statistics would be of no concern except that the liberals confess to being discriminatory against conservatives. That is the second part of the answer. In 2012 Inbar and Lammers published a pair of studies that asked social and personality psychology faculty if they would discriminate against conservative faculty in hiring decisions, grant reviews, paper reviews, and symposium invitations. In social psychology there is a very strong prohibition against discrimination and bigotry. Yet these social and personality psychologists manifested significant discrimination in all four categories! For example, over one in three of these psychologists would discriminate against conservatives in hiring decisions. This is the number who were willing to confess that they would discriminate. The presumption is that many more are willing to discriminate but are unwilling to confess to this unfairness. Thus the lopsided preponderance of liberal faculty does have an effect on faculty

hiring. Many opponents of Senate Bill 83 claim that it would diminish the willingness of potential faculty members to come to Ohio. I question this hypothesis. However the data show that the current situation certainly diminishes the ability of conservative faculty to come to Ohio, because they never would be offered a faculty position. A severe critic of Senate Bill 83, Lalitha Pamidigantam, in a *Columbus Dispatch* op-ed points out that universities should be a bastion of ideological diversity. I fully agree. Yet the current situation demonstrably lessens ideological diversity. Thus I suggest that Ms. Pamidigantam and everyone else should be in favor of this Bill if they truly support ideological diversity.

Discrimination against one's relatively high-status faculty colleagues is a serious business. Discrimination against students is a lot easier. When David Horowitz spoke at OSU several years ago, he asked the audience if they felt pressure to agree with a professor's political views. One female student stood up and said that she felt she had to agree with the professor despite

her private disagreement. She was obviously upset as she told us of her plight.

Some opponents of Senate Bill 83 have stated that this bill impinges on academic freedom. I think that the current situation is a lot more damaging to academic freedom. The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education found in a large survey that 60% of US college students self-censor their political views. Thus we can safely conclude that the current situation is poisonous to the free expression of ideas. Professor Messer-Kruse of Bowling Green State University fears that passage of Senate Bill 83 would hamper his ability to teach his course in ethnic studies. My reading of the bill leads me to disagree. Teaching factual history, including such troubling facts as Thomas Jefferson owned slaves, would not be prohibited. What would be prohibited is a current requirement of a program in the OSU College of Education and Human Ecology that all participants in the program must acknowledge White privilege. In my opinion this political view or any political view

should not be required in order to participate in any Ohio university official program. Senate Bill 83 prohibits this type of political litmus test. About a quarter of Ohio's counties are officially in Appalachia. These counties are overwhelmingly White. For example, my wife grew up in Jackson County, which is 96% White. The median per capita income there is \$25, 843. I've lived in Appalachia for much of my life. I think that the White folks in Appalachia would be absolutely astonished to learn that they have enjoyed White privilege, especially since 18% of the folks in Jackson County live below the official poverty line. If they refused to acknowledge their White privilege, they would be barred from the OSU program that required acknowledgement of White privilege. Senate Bill 83 would rectify this situation.

Biology Professor Rissing in a *Columbus Dispatch* article pointed out “. . . biological insights . . . helped them [students] understand issues of social concern.” He feared that Senate Bill 83 would make his courses boring by prohibiting such a

teaching strategy. Again, I respectfully disagree. The Bill prohibits inculcating any social, political or religious point of view. In my opinion, many critics of the Bill are attacking a “straw man” that doesn’t exist. The Bill does not prohibit discussion of social issues. It prohibits indoctrination.

Some critics of the Bill assert that it micro-manages the faculty. What about the requirement that faculty members be reviewed annually? Annual reviews already occur in most departments. Unless one is self-employed, an evaluation of one’s performance is nearly a universal feature of being employed anywhere in the United States. There is already plenty of so-called micro-management of the faculty. I was the chair of Ohio University Educational Policy Committee. Our committee created the general education requirements for the entire undergraduate curriculum. A faculty member couldn’t just insert his or her course into the general education requirements. Our committee first had to approve of it. No faculty member could create any course without the approval

of the Curriculum Council. Ohio University faculty didn't consider these restrictions on faculty prerogatives to be micro-management. We all recognized that there were legitimate boundaries on our courses and university requirements.

Letters and op-eds in Ohio newspapers contain such fears that Senate Bill 83 is contrary to the elimination of racism, obtaining a more just and equitable society, and promoting peace. These are indeed worthy goals. Does OSU require 132 diversity officials, whose annual pay could fund full tuition for over 1,000 students? Diversity of viewpoint is a worthy goal, too, but discriminating against conservative faculty would seem to limit viewpoint diversity, not foster it. Training in "microaggression" detection at Ohio universities teach students to feel oppressed if someone asks an innocuous question such as "Where are you from?" This is probably the most common question asked by freshmen on their first day on campus. I suggest that no freshman would think they were being treated aggressively when asked this question. OSU has multiple courses in

microaggression detection. I question whether such courses could possibly promote world peace, obtaining a more just and equitable society, or the elimination of racism. The goals sound worthy, but the reality of their implementation is far more aggressive than the behaviors they are supposed to address. In my opinion, Senate Bill 83 does more to promote the goals we all want than does the current situation on Ohio's colleges and universities.

I'd be pleased to answer any questions you might have.