

Pamela McVay, Ph.D.

Professor of History

Chair, Department of History and Civic Engagement

Ursuline College

Testimony before the Workforce and Education Committee of the Ohio Senate

April 19, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I want to especially thank Senator Cirino, who took the time to send me a witness statement form before the legislature had even come back in session. I am Dr. Pamela McVay. I am the chair of the department of History and Civic Engagement at Ursuline College and have been a faculty member there since 1994. As a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I recognize the stature and international influence of Ohio's state colleges and universities as well as the vital role our state legislature plays in achieving and maintaining their excellence.

I am here to comment on SB 83's proposed requirement that all undergraduates in state colleges and universities take three credit hours in US History or US government. The bill also recommends incorporating several foundational American documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers and the US Constitution.

All these crucial documents were forged in heated, often angry, debates—debates that sometimes ended up sacrificing sacred principles for temporary gain, as in the Three-Fifths compromise. As we know from records of those proceedings, virtually no one who ratified the Constitution was entirely happy with its protections for individuals and for states. Knowing

human-created institutions can never be perfect, our Founders asked themselves how to nevertheless realize a more perfect union.

The authors of these documents did not use our contemporary vocabulary of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, but they shared its assumptions—that the American Experiment moves forward through citizen actions against injustice, that the Constitution is never finished, and that we must be forever on alert for ways to expand freedom and opportunity.

Diversity education teaches people to examine whether their own actions, their own institutions, and their own government, support or undermine American ideals as expressed by the Founders.

These provocative, difficult, and distressing questions lie at the heart of the American Experiment. Studying the documents recommended will equip students with the fortitude to continue the pursuit of a more perfect union. But to carry the vision of our Founders into the future, students need the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Thank you again for taking time to hear my witness statement. I have several hard copies to leave with the Committee if you want.