

**Opponent Testimony for SB83**  
**Senate Committee on Workforce and Higher Education**  
**4/19/2023**

**Joseph Bjorkman**  
**Citizen of Ohio**

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Committee on Workforce and Higher Education,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Joe Bjorkman.

I am a student at The Ohio State University and a proud Ohio public schools graduate. I get to enjoy the many things my University has to offer, including diverse and encouraging staff who care about my long term success.

I am here to express concern about Senate Bill 83 and to beg our government to stop attacking our schools, our students, and our state. This bill is based on political culture wars and preys on fear-mongering abstracts often highlighted in partisan media outlets. It will ruin our state's universities and will be a detrimental factor in potential students who consider attending colleges in Ohio.

There are a lot of problems that I have with the bill, but I'll focus on four main topics. This bill is bad for students, it's bad for faculty, it's bad for higher education, and it's bad for Ohio's future.

This bill will immediately impact students, like myself and my peers. If I can specifically point to Section 3345.0217 (B), which is page 8, where the bill proposes affirmation of intellectual diversity but prohibits DEI. A section which should be about freedom of speech is now prohibiting DEI and mandating how we can learn. I fear this section will also scare students who want to ask professors deeper questions about these "controversial topics" but can't because their professors can't inform them.

I also fear that this attempt to legally require an acceptance of "intellectual diversity" will backfire and only cause more tension. Those who may want rigorous debate may fear potential disciplinary sanctions as prescribed in Sec. 3345.0219 (B) for engaging in debate. Further, those who use hate speech can potentially attempt to defend their violent and bigoted language by claiming "intellectual diversity rights".

There are efforts at universities to engage in civil discourse, but these efforts must be based on respect. By possibly condoning bigoted and harmful language, this bill would rather encourage more aggressive and harmful conversations or no conversations at all. This is not a solution for our students.

This bill will immediately impact faculty, like my professors who have dedicated their lives to education and to enriching the lives of students. Professors are already overloaded with work, and their focus should be on research and educating their students. By forcing professors to create the syllabi that this bill requires, it would shift focus from education to bureaucracy. Since many classes are also taught by a plethora of professors, it would be near impossible to be consistent with how this law is written.

Further, by listing faculty teaching subjects, this bill puts educators in harm's way when people who disagree with their research now have access to both their content and their contact information. There is no reason to create a public syllabus search forum for any reason except as an attempt to "blacklist" professors who teach certain topics.

This bill will immediately impact higher education: as an industry, a profession, and as an aspect of our economy. This bill creates many abstract requirements that have real world consequences. I don't believe that we should be restricting state funds for our educational systems based on what an arbitrary bureaucrat determines as credible information.

I fear that the requirement to provide information on a university's operating budget will only be used as a reason to cut funding for our educational systems. This action would only raise the personal cost of college attendance and not allow working class citizens to seek higher education.

This bill will impact our state's future, specifically our population, economy, and workforce. This bill is dangerous. It discourages people from attending college in Ohio. It discourages talented people from working here. This will only result in a further population fall, a weakened economy, and a dilapidated workforce.

Again, my name is Joe Bjorkman and I am a student and citizen providing opponent testimony for Senate Bill 83.

I ask you to vote no on this bill and to focus on improving workforce opportunities for younger Ohioans.

Thank you.