

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

Thank you for considering my testimony. My name is Sara McCormick, and I am a fourth-year doctoral student in Counseling Psychology at the University of Akron. In addition to being a student and a psychologist in training, I currently work with my university's Office of Multicultural Development to provide programming for LGBTQ+ students on campus. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House.

As a psychologist in training, I research "minority stress", which refers to the chronic psychological and physiological stress associated with living in an environment that is hostile to you as a result of your identity (Brooks, 1981; Meyer, 2003). Research has demonstrated a link between minority stress and poor health outcomes for people of color and LGBTQ+ individuals (Ahmed et al., 2022; Cochran et al., 2003; Lei et al., 2022; Meyer & Frost, 2013; Owen et al., 2021; Pittman et al., 2017; Pugh et al, 2021; Wei et al, 2010). While minority stress harms folks' mental and physical health, there are ways to protect against it. Notably, providing community connection may reduce the harm that is done by discrimination and prejudice (Kertzner et al, 2009; Flanders et al, 2019; McConnell et al, 2018).

The above is what I know from my interaction with the research. But I also can state this unequivocally from my work with students. Having access to organizations that promote and protect diversity is not merely some political stance. Student spaces like these prevent students from dropping out, prevent students from missing class, and prevent students from experiencing mental health crises (Bissonette & Szymanski, 2019). These spaces are not an optional accessory to higher education. They are vital aspects of it. The students I work with have advocated for years to have spaces like this on their campus, because they know that the lives of LGBTQ+ students and students of color are demonstrably worse without policies and programs in place to address their needs.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill, which would strip students of the vital spaces that allow them to build a meaningful life at their institutions of higher education, as well as in the state of Ohio. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

(Below you may find a list of references to research which addresses the impact of Minority Stress and the importance of community connection)

Ahmed, S. R., Serpas, D. G., Chavira, D. A., & Myers, H. F. (2022). A structural model examining racism, stress, and psychological symptoms among Arab American adolescents. *Cultural diversity and ethnic minority psychology*. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/cdp0000550>

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Cochran, S. D., Sullivan, J. G., & Mays, V. M. (2003). Prevalence of mental disorders, psychological

distress, and mental health services use among lesbian, gay, and bisexual adults in the United States. *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology*, 71(1), 53.

Flanders, C. E., Shuler, S. A., Desnoyers, S. A., & VanKim, N. A. (2019). Relationships between social support, identity, anxiety, and depression among young bisexual people of color. *Journal of Bisexuality*, 19(2), 253-275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15299716.2019.1617543>

Kertzner, R. M., Meyer, I. H., Frost, D. M., & Stirratt, M. J. (2009). Social and psychological well-being in lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals: The effects of race, gender, age, and sexual identity. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 79(4), 500-510.

Lei, N., Velez, B. L., Seoud, J. M., & Motulsky, W. N. (2022). A test of Minority Stress Theory with Asian Americans. *The Counseling Psychologist*. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F00110000221107554>

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Pittman, D. M., Cho Kim, S., Hunter, C. D., & Obasi, E. M. (2017). The role of minority stress in second-generation Black emerging adult college students' high-risk drinking behaviors. *Cultural diversity and ethnic minority psychology*, 23(3), 445. <https://doi.org/10.1037%2Fcdp0000135>

Pugh, M., Perrin, P. B., Rybarczyk, B., & Tan, J. (2021). Racism, mental health, healthcare provider trust, and medication adherence among black patients in safety-net primary care. *Journal of Clinical Psychology in Medical Settings*, 28(1), 181-190. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10880-020-09702-y>

Wei, M., Liao, K. Y. H., Chao, R. C. L., Mallinckrodt, B., Tsai, P. C., & Botello-Zamarron, R. (2010). Minority stress, perceived bicultural competence, and depressive symptoms among ethnic minority college students. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 57(4), 411. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0020790>