

Testimony of Katie Clonan-Roy, Ph.D.
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair
April 17, 2023

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Katie Clonan-Roy, and I am an Associate Professor of Curriculum & Foundations at Cleveland State University (CSU), where I have taught for 6 years. I do not represent CSU, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

I oppose this bill for many reasons. One of the most important reasons is that **the policies and practices proposed in the bill do not align with recommendations for best practices in higher education**, as outlined by the [American Educational Research Association](#) (AERA) and the [Association for the Study of Higher Education](#) (ASHE).

For example, SB 83 stipulates that public institutions of higher education “not require diversity, equity, and inclusion courses or training for students, staff, or faculty.” This is actually in direct opposition to what AERA and ASHE, and leading researchers that make up these professional organizations, recommend. Further, SB 83 demands that institutions of higher education “educate students by means of free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry to seek the truth.” Limiting required courses and training on diversity, equity, and inclusion, actually limits students’ ability to engage in free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry. Further, courses and trainings on diversity, equity, and inclusion are based on peer-reviewed social science (rather than uninformed opinions), which supports students’ ability to engage in rigorous intellectual inquiry. Relatedly, **this bill stands to jeopardize free speech on campus**, a value that is important to university students, faculty, and staff, across the political spectrum. These factors make higher education in Ohio unattractive to current and prospective students, who are often attracted to free speech, rigorous intellectual inquiry, and the ability to engage in dialogue about how to make our state and our society more equitable for all.

Further, SB 83 demands that public universities “not treat, advantage, disadvantage, or segregate any faculty, staff, or students by membership in groups defined by characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression”. Again, this stipulation stands in direct opposition to what research (endorsed by AERA, ASHE, and other research-focused educational organizations) recommends as best practice. **We know that affinity groups for historically marginalized populations are best practice** in higher education. Relatedly, Cleveland State University was ranked as the [#1 University in Ohio for promoting social mobility](#) by *U.S. News & World Report*. The work that CSU does to support students who experience racial/ ethnic, socio-economic, religious,

and/ or gender- and sexuality-based oppression, such as providing affinity groups and specialized population-specific programs, is critical to promoting social mobility for individuals and families and lifting up our region, economically and socially. SB 83 would not only hurt our students, it would hurt our region and our state.

What happens in schools (both K-12 and higher education) is too critically important for individual lives and community trajectories for it to be determined by political opinions. Rather, policies and practices implemented in higher education must follow what the science says: what overwhelming evidence and data points to as best practices. None of the proposals in SB 83 align with what educational research asserts is best practice. If the Ohio legislature wants to make positive change in higher education, they should consult educational experts and professional associations like AERA and ASHE, so that changes are actually backed by science (again, rather than by uninformed political opinion).

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful and dangerous bill. Please contact me if you would like any references to the research I cited above - I am happy to provide them to you. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Katie Clonan-Roy 

k.clonanroy@csuohio.edu