

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is James Vacca. I am a student at Columbus State Community College, a professional in the human services field, and a member of the LGBTQ+ community. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House.

This legislation is an attack on academic freedoms and a massive overreach by the state into the governance and operations of public institutions. Banning diversity, equity, and inclusion programs leaves students unprepared for the multicultural and global nature of work in today's world. It dismisses race, culture, and identity as things separate from education, rather than integral parts of the process. It weaponizes a call for intellectual diversity to censor inclusive education, critical thinking and analysis, and honesty about the past.

This legislation doesn't stop there. It also deprives students of the chance to collaborate and associate with their peers in groups, clubs, and organizations on campus that are based on race, sex, sexuality, or gender identity. This is an outright attack on members of my community. This bill would eliminate the vital role that these groups have in the life of a student in higher education; providing a safe space for students to relax, form friendships, and build positive social support networks.

If all this wasn't enough, this legislation robs higher education employees the right to strike. There is no reason to take away the sole ability these employees have to bargain for better conditions and address workplace issues. The right to strike is often the only tool employees have to fight against management and corporate structures.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful and dangerous bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.