

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 Silver Flight and I am a current college student who would be greatly impacted by a bill like this. I have three degrees¹ and will be receiving my fourth—a J.D. from the University of Cincinnati College of Law—this spring.

In all four of my academic programs, I have engaged in debate about controversial topics and have had professors who agreed with me and professors who disagreed with me. SB 83 claims to promote freedom of speech and academic debate so that students can grow as scholars and learn to develop their own beliefs about controversial matters. However, **SB 83 does the opposite: it chills free speech and academic freedom.**

This bill chills free speech by telling faculty and staff they cannot “inculcate any points of view” and must “create a classroom atmosphere free of political, racial, gender, and religious bias”—that is, they can’t express their own opinions. **How would I learn how to express my own opinions about controversial topics if the very professors I am learning from are prohibited from doing so?** Students need professors who challenge them in order to develop their critical thinking skills and learn to argue and present their beliefs on controversial matters.

This bill will not aid free speech and academic freedom in the classroom. Instead, it will create an environment where controversial subjects are avoided and students do not participate in the rigorous debate that would have helped them develop as students, citizens, and future leaders. Therefore, I ask you to vote **NO** on SB 83.

Sincerely,

Silver Flight

¹ B.M. from Miami University in violin performance '17, M.M. from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in violin/viola pedagogy '19, M.A. from the University of Cincinnati in women’s, gender, and sexuality studies '22.