

Testimony of Olivia Gallo, a Student at Miami University
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 Olivia Gallo, and I am a first-year student at Miami University. I do not represent Miami University but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

I am a first-year, Organizational Leadership and Social Justice major at Miami University. While this combination sounds a little strange, it was very deeply thought out. I decided to major in these two topics because I love people, I love learning about their experiences, and I love making the world a better place. I want to know more about encouraging people's strengths while fighting for equity and equality for all.

As a student at Miami University, I have seen the benefit of a liberal education. I have found immense value in learning from the perspectives of others and learning about all the different subjects that Miami has to offer. From my little time at the University, I feel like my educational horizons have expanded more than I ever could have imagined. Senator Cirino in his opinion column stated that his bill would "ensure intellectual diversity", and he felt that the people opposing the bill would "want to protect their woke fiefdom so they can continue to churn out like-minded and intolerant opponents of intellectual diversity." (Cirino). The truth of these two statements is that SB 83 and HB 151 do not promote intellectual freedom, they limit it. They want to put students in classrooms that restrict the ability to hear the perspectives of others, they want to restrict classrooms that discuss the real history and not the whitewashed one that is forced down our throats for years. There is not an ounce of actual freedom represented in this bill.

The argument for this bill is that conservative professors feel as though they cannot share their opinions in the classroom. I honestly completely understand that. I don't think we should be silencing anyone's voice. Yet, SB 83 completely contradicts the supposed intent of this bill because if this bill is supposed to allow everyone to share their diverse thoughts, why does it put limits on "controversial topics"? Why does this bill silence students and

teachers' ability to gather in support of a “controversial topic”? There is no promotion of the diversity of thought in this bill.

As an out-of-state student, paying out-of-state tuition, I can say that I would reconsider my enrollment at Miami University if SB 83 passed. From a student perspective, this bill limits the safety, freedom, and education that students would receive in Ohio. This bill perpetuates hate and silences diverse voices. The “intellectual freedom” that this bill advocates for are the perspectives of white men that we have heard for centuries. We need to let other people speak.

Speaking personally to the senators that support this bill, I ask you to consider the students who will actually be sitting in classrooms in Ohio. We ask for you to not speak for us, but let us speak through you. Put value in what we value, the freedom of inclusivity and love in our classrooms. A diverse education is one where everyone feels like their experiences and contributions are valued, and that in turn makes students feel loved in their classrooms. Don't you want to love the students that you represent?

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on Senate Bill 83. Thank you for your time.