

Testimony of Holly Clemens, Ph.D., LMT
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Jerry Cerino, 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. Holly Clemens and I am a Professor of Sport & Exercise Studies, Health, and Physical Education at Cuyahoga Community College, where I have taught at the college for about 33 years. I do not represent Cuyahoga Community College, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill (SB) 83.

I am writing a few key points in my strong opposition to Senate Bill 83.

1. Senate Bill 83 (the so-called Ohio Higher Education Enhancement Act), was introduced by Ohio Senator, Jerry Cirino, who happens to be my representative. SB 83 appears to find a solution to a problem that does not exist in higher education in the great state of Ohio. Ohio Senator Cirino clearly states that SB 83 deals with a trend towards indoctrination in our universities. It appears his basis for the “indoctrination” comes from a few of his constituents that voiced their opinions loudly. So, his solution is to develop a bill that dismantles the higher education process in Ohio based on a few loud voices. I ask, is there really a problem? If so, where are your facts? Where is your well-established research and where is your scientific evidence? What is your agenda? Is your agenda the indoctrination of students toward your own personal beliefs and opinions and your own “Culture War Ideology?” Don’t you think our college students deserve freedom to make their own choices and form their own beliefs without your one-sided ideology?
2. As a faculty member and Health Care Professional, equity, inclusion, and critical thinking relate to all aspects of race, sex, gender identity, and yes, even faith. These are issues at the core of what we teach and what our students will encounter in the real world. As we educate and provide skills to our students at the college, they need to be aware of controversial topics related to health and health care in the real world when they interact with clients/patients and their families. This ability to work with clients/patients and their families comes from being knowledgeable about issues related to diversity, equity, inclusion, gender, culture and history, past and present. These are not liberal views, these are issues related to humanity, empathy, sympathy, and caring of which many of our politicians appear to have misplaced. SB 83 would make our students more like “mindless robots” rather than understanding that differences exist and how to best work with those differences using critical thinking skills in the various worksite settings.
3. SB 83 seems to be a massive overstep on the part of the Ohio government. If you recall, it is Senator Cirino and many of his like-minded colleagues who are continually saying “get government off our backs.” Do you not see the “hypocrisy” of SB 83 as a major overstep of government on our educational systems and our freedoms to provide students with the highest quality education? Students attending college should receive as much information, education,

diverse training, and life-skills they can to be better stewards of our state and of our country. SB 83 denies students these rights.

4. Do Ohio politicians not understand that programs in Ohio are at risk of losing accreditation if SB 83 passes. Why is this important? Accreditation helps recruit students to an institution to let them know they will get the education they need to be successful to gain employment and be successful post-graduation. What will potential employers think of a state's decision to topple educational diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts as more and more companies coming to hio embrace a diversity, equity and inclusion mindset? Additionally, if SB 83 passes, we would lose current scholars and educators as well as potential scholars and educators. It would make it harder to attract students and faculty to Ohio institutions of higher learning. In the long run, Ohio will become less competitive economically.

SB 83 would HARM, not ENHANCE higher education in Ohio.

SB 83 is bad for students, bad for higher education, and bad for the state of Ohio!

I strongly repeat my opposition to Senate Bill 83.

With regards,

Holly Clemens, Ph.D., LMT
Professor-Cuyahoga Community College
Cuyahoga County Resident and Resident of the state of Ohio