

To 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 Bear F. Braumoeller. I am a registered Republican in the state of Ohio and a Professor in the Department of Political Science at The Ohio State University. The views expressed in my testimony are my own, not those of my employer.

I write in very strong opposition to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House.

I understand the motivation for the bill. I always return calls from parents, and I once spoke at length with one concerned father who wanted the best possible future for his son, but who worried that sending him to college would indoctrinate him and undermine the morals that his family had instilled in him. I am sure that there are many others like him. Parents shouldn't have to worry that a quality education will come at the cost of one's values.

This bill is a terrible way to achieve that goal, however. The first reason is straightforward: Its removal of tenure protection and provisions against partisanship will be used mostly against conservative faculty. I try very hard to keep ideology out of my classroom, because the whole point of college is teaching students *how* to think, not *what* to think. Most of my colleagues do the same. Knowing what I know about student complaints, though, I assure you that if the system of post-tenure reviews described in the bill is implemented, my department and others like it will become less ideologically balanced rather than more.

The second reason is grounded firmly in free-market economics: Faculty value the certainty of secure tenure protection, without having to worry that two or three bad evaluations or an unfriendly chair might result in termination, and frankly, the best faculty have other options. After Wisconsin abolished tenure, other universities immediately tried to poach the University of Wisconsin's top faculty. Those that were retained were only retained at high cost. Recruiting would become more difficult as well. I know that, if this bill had been enacted before I left Harvard University in 2008, I would have avoided Ohio State unless I had had no other option. If jobs at OSU do not include a guarantee of tenure but those at peer institutions do, attracting and maintaining excellence will be more costly and far less possible.

A third reason is that the bill is based on faulty assumptions about why college students reexamine their political ideologies. Professor Hal Arkes, who testified before your Committee, cited a study about political diversity in the field of Psychology that probably resonated with the Republican members of the Committee.¹ Without going into the problems with that study, I would note that

¹ Inbar, Y., & Lammers, J. (2012). Political Diversity in Social and Personality Psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(5), 496-503.

there is a big literature on this subject, and its conclusions are in the minority. The most compelling evidence, to my mind, comes from a very careful and much more recent study that uses data from natural experiments at Cornell and Michigan.² The study found that going to these colleges, in and of itself, had no impact on ideology; rather, the ideology of a student's roommate had a significant influence on that student's ideology—especially for conservative students, who are outnumbered. It should come as no surprise that the people we spend the most time with are the ones who have the biggest impact on the way we think about the world. The study is among the best of its kind to date. And if its conclusions are correct, *none of the provisions in this bill will have any impact on political bias.*

I could nitpick the provisions of the bill in more detail—I've read it closely, and I could go on at great length about the problems I see in it—but I suspect you have plenty of other testimony to get through, and I don't want to get bogged down in minutiae. The bottom line is simple: I cannot urge you strongly enough to vote against this bill.

I realize that urging you to vote “no” without offering an alternative is likely to be ineffective, so let me offer one: Rather than passing a deeply flawed bill into law and seriously handicap Ohio's outstanding institutions of higher education, table it for the moment and task the Presidents of Ohio's top public Universities with forming an ideologically balanced committee to review concerns and available evidence and make recommendations for a more effective bill. The threat of SB83 being revived will motivate the faculty to take the job seriously. And while I'm aware that some members of the Committee don't hold faculty in the highest regard, I can tell you this: Whether I agree with my colleagues or disagree with them, they are very eager to serve the people of their state, and they take pride in the work they do.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Bear F. Braumoeller
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² Strother, Logan et al. (2021). College Roommates Have a Modest but Significant Influence on Each Other's Political Ideology. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118(2): e2015514117.