Testimony on Senate Bill 83, Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Submitted via email by Lisa Vahey, Shaker Heights, lvahey@gmail.com
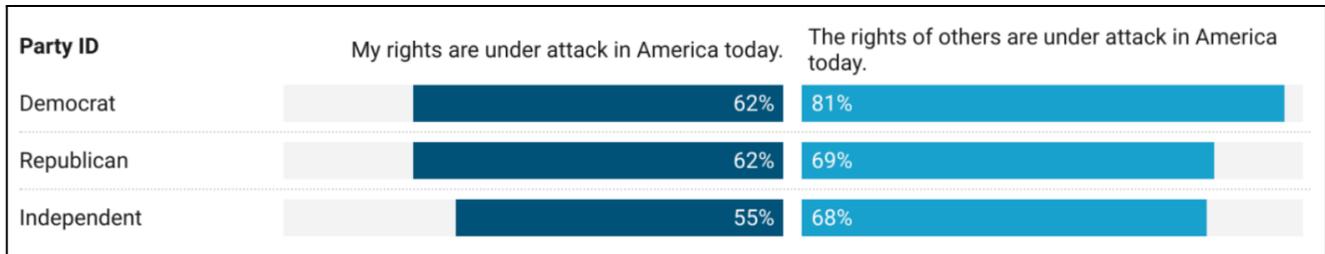April 17, 2023

Chair Ciriano, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to share my testimony opposing SB 83.

I am an educator who consults in public, private, faith-based and charter schools across Ohio. I'm also the mother of two public high school graduates, an active community volunteer - in Shaker Heights, through my church, and as an advocate for education. I know that SB 83 will harm Ohio, and I'm encouraging this committee to oppose SB 83.

I'm sure you read today's story in the *Ohio Capital Journal* unpacking that Ohio's public college and community college enrollment has dropped 12% since 2012, despite the fact that our high school graduate rate has increased.
https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2023/04/17/ohio-higher-education-enrollment-drops-12-over-decade

I'd like your Committee to do whatever it can to connect with young Ohioans and hear what matters to them and their families. When researchers at Harvard's Kennedy School at the Institute of Politics polled young people late last year, no matter their party affiliation, young people felt their rights, and the rights of others, were under attack:

Party ID	My rights are under attack in America today.	The rights of others are under attack in America today.
Democrat	62%	81%
Republican	62%	69%
Independent	55%	68%

Source: https://iop.harvard.edu/fall-2022-harvard-youth-poll

Here in Ohio, when Baldwin Wallace University and the Ohio Children's Defense Fund polled families, no matter the demographic, families wanted equity prioritized:

Q67: "How important do you think it is that schools prioritize equity? (Equity in education is defined as: each student has access to relevant and challenging academic experiences and educational resources necessary for success across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background and/or income.)"

- 90% of parents think it is important that schools prioritize equity.
  - 92% of women agreed vs. 88% of men ($p = 0.0049$).
  - 92% of younger parents agreed vs. 88% of older parents ($p = 0.0067$).
  - 91% of parents with an associate's degree or less agreed vs. 87% of parents with a bachelor's degree or more ($p = 0.0031$).
  - 95% of urban parents agreed, followed by 89% of suburban parents, and 88% of rural parents ($p = 0.0137$).
  - 95% of Democrats agreed, followed by 90% of Republicans, and 87% of Independents ($p = 0.0002$).

Source: https://cdfohio.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2022/08/BW-CRI-Topline-Report.pdf

And please take a look at the 56 skills and attitudes that the experts at McKinsey & Company researched as those that "all citizens will benefit from having… no matter the sector in which they work or their occupation":

Cognitive

Critical thinking
- Structured problem solving
- Logical reasoning
- Understanding biases
- Seeking relevant information

Planning and ways of working
- Work-plan development
- Time management and prioritization
- Agile thinking

Communication
- Storytelling and public speaking
- Asking the right questions
- Synthesizing messages
- Active listening

Mental flexibility
- Creativity and imagination
- Translating knowledge to different contexts
- Adopting a different perspective
- Adaptability
- Ability to learn

Interpersonal

Mobilizing systems
- Role modeling
- Win–win negotiations
- Crafting an inspiring vision
- Organizational awareness

Developing relationships
- Empathy
- Inspiring trust
- Humility
- Sociability

Teamwork effectiveness
- Fostering inclusiveness
- Motivating different personalities
- Resolving conflicts
- Collaboration
- Coaching
- Empowering

Self-leadership

Self-awareness and self-management
- Understanding own emotions and triggers
- Self-control and regulation
- Understanding own strengths
- Integrity
- Self-motivation and wellness
- Self-confidence

Entrepreneurship
- Courage and risk-taking
- Driving change and innovation
- Energy, passion, and optimism
- Breaking orthodoxies

Goals achievement
- Ownership and decisiveness
- Achievement orientation
- Grit and persistence
- Coping with uncertainty
- Self-development

Digital

Digital fluency and citizenship
- Digital literacy
- Digital learning
- Digital collaboration
- Digital ethics

Software use and development
- Programming literacy
- Data analysis and statistics
- Computational and algorithmic thinking

Understanding digital systems
- Data literacy
- Smart systems
- Cybersecurity literacy
- Tech translation and enablement

Source:

https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/defining-the-skills-citizens-will-need-in-the-future-world-of-work

I'll call out a few, across several of the categories:

Understanding bias   *Active listening*   *Empathy*
Fostering inclusiveness   *Resolving conflicts*   *Breaking orthodoxies*
Understanding own emotions and triggers

I want to now, respectfully, connect the dots:
- Ohio college enrollment is dropping!
- Young people feel their rights and others are under attack, and
- their families *want* a focus on equity and in fact,
- our schools - secondary, community college and higher ed institutions - should be adjusting and organizing, so our students graduate with the skills and dispositions needed for 21st century workplace success.

As our Senate leaders of workforce and higher education, I ask you to take leadership to:
- Raise Ohio college enrollment
- Act to protect all young people's right
- Guarantee families that you're focused on equity
- Prepare Ohio students to thrive in the 21st Century workforce

SB 83 does NONE OF THESE THINGS. It threatens enrollment, student's rights, equity, and skill building for the future. I watched the proponent testimony, and I have closely followed the statements of Ohio students and professors in the media. SB 83
- Creates an environment of distrust and confusion for students and faculty.
- Stifles and silenes the kind of discourse that helps our young people grow their skills.
- Pulls critical resources - time AND money - away from teaching and into unnecessary record-keeping and documentation.

As I talk with other parents of high school students, they reinforce what I've shared - SB 83 is going to push students out of Ohio higher education - and potentially, out of Ohio for the long term. Our young people (and their families) want to be heard. And they want their hard-earned tuition dollars and the college debt they incur to pay off when they gain the skills (like empathy, understanding bias and resolving conflict) that they need for workplace success. SB 83 takes that opportunity away. ***SB 83 destroys our higher ed system, ignores what Ohio students and families need and want, and leaves us with a less-prepared workforce.***

Please think clearly about what we need. Listen to our students. Please ***OPPOSE SB 83***.