

Testimony of Jason Whitfield, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair

April 17th, 2023

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

My name is Jason Whitfield, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, and I am an associate professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders in the College of Health and Human Services at Bowling Green State University (BGSU), where I have taught for eight years. I do not represent BGSU but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

After closely reviewing Senate Bill 83 and comparing it with the standards and competencies of various allied health fields, it appears that key components Sec. 1713.57, Sec. 3345.0217, and Sec. 3345.78 directly conflict with accreditation standards related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices that are required by national professional and accrediting bodies. Diversity, within the accreditation policies outlined below, incorporates a range of factors including, but not limited to, age, disability, ethnicity, first language, gender, nationality, race, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and veteran status. Numerous accreditation bodies require programs to incorporate DEI into curricula, policies, and procedures. Specific examples are outlined below:

Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology. Accreditation standards ([CAA-ASHA](#)) require Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology programs to infuse DEI content throughout the curriculum and integrate cultural humility into service delivery. Students must be given opportunities to identify and acknowledge implicit and explicit bias, recognize the impact of cultural and linguistic variables on patient care, understand social determinants of health, and acknowledge cultural and linguistic diversity among various groups. Implementation strategies include DEI workshops and learning opportunities for faculty and students.

Dietetics. Accreditation standards ([ACEND](#)) require Nutrition and Dietetics Didactic Programs to incorporate DEI concepts into various aspects of the curriculum, including cultural humility, self-reflection, and DEI competency building in learning activities. Additionally, faculty and preceptors must undergo DEI training on strategies to recognize and monitor biases and reduce instances of microaggressions and discrimination. Programs are also required to demonstrate tangible action towards enrolling a diverse student body and establish policies to support equitable treatment of students from all backgrounds.

Physical Therapy. Accreditation standards ([CAPTE](#)) require Physical Therapy programs to implement student recruitment and admission policies that are based on appropriate and equitable criteria and are designed to enhance the diversity of the student body. Proposed revisions to the standards will likely require programs to incorporate DEI throughout the curriculum and promote cultural humility among faculty and students.

Social Work. Accreditation standards ([CSWE](#)) require students in Social Work programs to meet competencies related to advancing human rights and engaging in anti-racism, diversity, and equity. Programs are required to integrate DEI practices and content across all aspects of the curricular design and address issues such as racism, privilege, and discrimination.

Senate Bill 83 will not only affect programs that train audiologists, dieticians, physical therapists, social workers, and speech-language pathologists, but it will also ban similar DEI requirements for accredited programs that prepare [medical doctors](#), [physicians assistants](#), [pharmacists](#), and [occupational therapists](#), among numerous other health and human service professions. Enacting Senate Bill 83 could jeopardize the accreditation of numerous professionally accredited programs, as it would prohibit required aspects of professional training related to DEI. In Ohio, there are over 115 professionally accredited programs that train future practitioners in the nine disciplines listed above. This number does not include other allied health fields that likely have similar accreditation standards.

Larger Impact

Failure to incorporate DEI practices in these professions will negatively impact the quality of care Ohioans receive. Data from a [CDC report](#) shows a concerning rise in maternal mortality in recent years, with the maternal death rate among Black women being more than two times greater than for white women. Data from another [CDC report](#) indicates that the age-adjusted death rate in rural areas was 20% higher than in urban and suburban areas in 2019. These findings, among numerous others, reflect the complex vulnerabilities in our health and human service systems that must be addressed in clinical education. Educating our future health and human service workforce to provide the highest quality care is critical. We must continue to uphold the highest standards of healthcare education and practice so that every Ohioan receives the care they deserve.

In summary, Senate Bill 83 would interfere with professionally accredited programs in Ohio that meet key requirements needed to maintain accreditation. Furthermore, DEI requirements in the accreditation standards are intended to positively impact health disparities that exist across the full diversity of our population. As such, I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on Senate Bill 83. It must not be allowed to move forward and become law. Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony. I will respond to any questions you may have.

References

- Curtin, S. C., & Spencer, M. R. (2021). Trends in death rates in urban and rural areas: United States, 1999–2019. NCHS Data Brief, No. 417. National Center for Health Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db417.pdf>
- Hoyert, D. L. (2023). Maternal Mortality Rates in the United States, 2021. National Center for Health Statistics. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/maternal-mortality/2021/maternal-mortality-rates-2021.pdf>

Referenced Accreditation Policies

LCME (Liaison Committee on Medical Education)

- Policy: https://lcme.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2024-25-Functions-and-Structure_2023-03-21.docx
- 6 accredited Medical Schools in Ohio

ARC-PA (Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant)

- Policy: <https://www.arc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Standards-5th-Ed-March-2023.pdf>
- 17 accredited Physician Assistant Programs in Ohio (12 Continued; 5 provisional)

ACPE (Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education)

- Policy: <https://www.acpe-accredit.org/pdf/Rubric2016Guidelines20bUpdate2022.pdf>
- 7 accredited Pharmacy Programs in Ohio

ACOTE (Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education)

- Policy: <https://acoteonline.org/accreditation-explained/standards/>
- 5 accredited Doctoral of Occupational Therapy Programs in Ohio
- 6 accredited Masters of Occupational Therapy Programs in Ohio

CAPTE (Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education)

- Policy: <https://www.capteonline.org/globalassets/capte-docs/capte-pt-standards-required-elements.pdf>
- 11 accredited Physical Therapy Programs in Ohio

ACEND (Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics)

- Policy: <https://www.eatrightpro.org/-/media/files/eatrightpro/acend/accreditation-standards-fees-and-policies/2022-standards-and-templates/2022-accreditation-standards-for-nutrition-and-dietetics-didactic-programs.pdf>
- 11 accredited Nutrition and Dietetics Didactic Programs in Ohio

CSWE (Council on Social Work Education)

- Policy: <https://www.cswe.org/getmedia/94471c42-13b8-493b-9041-b30f48533d64/2022-EPAS.pdf>
- 27 accredited Baccalaureate Social Work Programs
- 11 accredited Masters Social Work Programs

CAA-ASHA (Council on Academic Accreditation)

- Policy: <https://caa.asha.org/siteassets/files/accreditation-standards-for-graduate-programs.pdf>
- 4 accredited Audiology Programs in Ohio
- 12 accredited Speech-Language Pathology Programs in Ohio