

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee,

My name is Kristy Townsend, and I am a relatively new citizen of Ohio. I am also an independent voter who has over the past 25+ years voted for republicans, democrats and independents. I am a mother of 3 kids and the co-founder and co-owner of a small start-up biotech company based in Ohio. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House.

My reasons are several, but I'd like to focus on the impacts this will have on Ohio's economy. As you probably know, higher education (colleges and universities) are ripe with innovation, new inventions, patents, licensed technology, and spin-out companies that enrich our society and are major economic drivers. Specifically, university discoveries are the main way that medicine finds new cures, diagnostics, and treatment strategies that save lives here and around the country. To do this, higher education requires diverse teams of researchers – and numerous studies from Google and other major private companies have clearly demonstrated through evidence and data that the diversity of our teams – in every way from age, race, ethnicity, gender, and more – directly influence how creatively and successfully we can solve problems.

This bill will have direct negative consequences on the innovation economy in Ohio – it will negatively impact our ability to obtain certain investments and funding sources, to recruit and retain the best and brightest talent (locally, nationally, and from around the world), and it will prevent the types of trainings that are needed to ensure that successful R&D teams are free from damaging biases that could prevent important discoveries from ever making impacts in our society.

I am excited to have brought my small company to Ohio and hope to increase jobs here and impact healthcare as a result of our discoveries and R&D that will grow our economy, but I am sincerely worried about the impact this bill will have on our ability to be successful in these endeavors.

I kindly ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this dangerous bill.

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