

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 Britta Bielak and I am writing to urgently request your attention to the detrimental effects of Ohio Senate Bill 83 on the integrity of education in Ohio's public universities. As a Professor at one of Ohio's public universities, I vehemently oppose this bill and urge you to prevent it from becoming law.

Unfortunately, SB 83 will force an education system that overlooks the history of our nation and its people as well as our current global climate crisis. As educators, we believe that the classroom must be a safe space where students are free to question, analyze, and discuss complex issues without fear of retribution or suppression. By ignoring issues such as climate change, slavery, forced removals of first people, and inequalities based on race, ethnicity, gender, and other characteristics, students will be deprived of opportunities to engage in rigorous and dynamic discussions about the built environment, and they will have less of an ability to develop skills of empathy critical to our professional practice. As practicing professionals, our students will significantly impact the local and/or global communities they serve and it is essential that they understand the real-world social and environmental impacts of their design and material solutions for a diverse range of clients of contexts.

Moreover, SB 83 would severely harm college students and employers in Ohio, as well as public higher education itself. The bill inappropriately intrudes upon the governance and management of nonprofit entities by involving university boards of trustees in faculty hiring and work responsibilities. This intrusion across the boundary of governance and management in any nonprofit entity is unacceptable and has no place in our education system. Additionally, the bill would replace locally designed teaching and research evaluations with procedures and rubrics created by state officials, thus raising concerns about political intrusions on academic freedom.

The repercussions of passing SB 83 will have lasting negative effects on the quality of public higher education in Ohio. It is imperative that we do not let political agendas interfere with the fundamental principles of education that we hold so dearly. As representatives of the people of Ohio, I urge you to stand up for academic freedom and to oppose this bill.

In conclusion, I implore you to consider the long-term effects that SB 83 will have on Ohio's public education system and to prevent its passage.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter and the opportunity to testify in opposition of SB83.

Sincerely,

Britta Bielak