

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 Elizabeth Wardle. I am the Howe Distinguished Professor of Written Communication at Miami University, where I also direct the Howe Center for Writing Excellence, in which we help faculty from every discipline innovate their teaching. I am the proud product of public education. My parents were missionaries and later my father was a leader in Christian non-profits and my mother was a state social worker for abused children. A public education is what they could afford, and it was an exceptional education that taught me to think and did not bury me in debt.

Though sponsored by Chairman Cirino, SB 83 did not originate in Ohio. It is an adaptation of work by two think tanks, the Goldwater and Manhattan Institutes, housed in Arizona and New York. Three men from [those two organizations set out in January](#) to draft “model legislative text” and persuade lawmakers to revise and propose it in their home states. The authors of this model text live in the Pacific Northwest, in New York City, and in Arizona. They seek to radically reimagine public higher education, though between them they have not attended a single public college. Instead, they have degrees from Princeton, Georgetown, and Harvard.

The right to a rigorous public education is a powerful right for *all* Americans and an essential piece of the American dream. Yet now we see three bills in Ohio that would weaken and destroy this path to a better life: SB83, HB151, and HB11. Once these bills do their work, the American dream will be at risk for Ohioans who can’t afford pricy Ivy League educations but who instead depend, as I did, on a top-notch *public* education.

Higher ed has a lot of problems that any faculty member you talk to would agree on: it is too expensive, there are too many administrators, there is too much bureaucracy. SB83 fixes none of these problems; instead, it would make higher ed *more* expensive and require us to hire *more* administrators to carry out its many unfunded mandates.

The sponsors of SB83 want accountability, but the evidence shows that many accountability measures are already in place:

- Our institutions already go through rigorous accreditation reviews from the Higher Learning Commission.
- Many of our programs also must go through regular accreditation reviews from their professional organizations.
- All of our majors and courses must be approved at multiple levels by ideologically diverse committees of faculty and administrators.
- All faculty go through rigorous annual reviews on top of extended promotion and tenure reviews, and those reviews *already* require us to share our student evaluations.
- We are all governed by our Boards of Trustees, a majority of whom are appointed by the Governor.

SB83 would turn our current system of accountability upside down and destroy innovative teaching--and Ohio's economy--in the process:

- SB83 would cause public colleges and universities to lose accreditation for many of the programs the state relies on for its workforce, like nursing, engineering, and business. This is because those professional accrediting bodies nearly all require their programs to teach future professionals how to work with others who are different from them. This is not woke ideology; it's just good business. If programs cannot meet accreditation standards, they will lose their accreditation and dozens of programs in our universities will close—programs that are the workforce pipeline on which companies like Intel rely.
- SB83 would also increase administrative bloat and the costs associated with it by forcing us to buy expensive software packages for sharing syllabi, hire people to run that software, and employ new administrators whose only job is enforcement.
- SB83 increases teaching loads so much that faculty could not innovate to produce research, run graduate programs, or even keep up with research created by faculty in other states to ensure that basic undergraduate courses are current. It also relies too heavily on unreliable student surveys to evaluate teaching, which very few students tend to complete anyway.

SB83 is an unfunded, big government mandate that sows suspicion and distrust. It is unnecessary and harmful to Ohioans. Despite what outsiders and special interests want you to think, those of us who teach students at colleges and universities across Ohio are not your enemies. We are your neighbors, we sit next to you at church, we shop at Kroger with you, we are your voters. We share a common desire to do what is best for *our* state and *our* students—a desire elite outsiders with Ivy League degrees do not share.

Ohioans are famously independent and self-governing; we have never liked interference from outsiders and we should not fall prey to their divisive tactics now. If you genuinely want to ensure that Ohio's education system is the best in the world and affordable and accessible to everyone, reject big government, reject outside efforts to divide neighbor from neighbor. Vote no on SB83 and instead reach out to teachers and work *with* us to improve higher education. My door is always open, and if you call, I will gladly answer.