

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 Misha Harris. I will soon be entering my sixth year in college and my fourth year as a full time student. I first attended Sinclair Community college for 2 years, and then attended Cedarville University for 2 years, my first year I studied mechanical engineering and my second year was spent as a pre-med student. Finally I came to Wright State University where I am currently studying nursing. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House.

As previously stated I have now switched majors twice throughout my time in college, while this may seem to be simple indecision there is actually a great deal more that went into my choices. One of the primary factors was the time it would take me to graduate. Unfortunately my mother had been diagnosed with Leukemia fairly recently and I wanted to go into a profession where I would be able to support my family in any way I could. Medical school and engineering school would simply take too long. I switched to nursing, which is my current major, and it will take me an additional two-three years to complete my degree.

While on the surface this may seem like an argument in favor of three year degrees it is actually quite the opposite. The four year bachelors program for each degree was incredibly stressful. Each semester I would be taking 2-3 difficult classes at a time and my only respite was my general education courses. If I had chosen three year programs it would have greatly increased my workload to the point where most, if not all, of my classes would've been too difficult to manage. Having four years to work with allowed me and my advisors to work together to figure out a plan where the most difficult classes were more spread out. This allowed me to have the time to truly learn the materials in each of my classes while managing three jobs

and a social life. If any more major specific classes were added to my workload I, along with many other students, would be forced to choose between working so we could afford rent and food, or quitting their jobs so that they can have a prayer of passing all of the classes that have been added to their schedules. If all degrees were made into three year programs I probably wouldn't have gone to college and if I had I wouldn't have stayed for long.

One way that many students are able to go through college without working is through scholarships. Scholarships serve to eliminate some degree of financial stress and many major opportunities include scholarships for women in stem, men in nursing, and ones for those in the lgbt+ community. These scholarships all serve to provide advantages for those who might otherwise be able to due to needing to work full time. Many scholarships promote diversity and help gain and keep students who might otherwise lose the opportunity for higher education. Eliminating scholarships that are designed to help the disadvantaged will cause universities to lose out on many prospective students.

People with different experiences have different needs. Everyone belongs to a community somewhere and many of these groups are represented on college campuses. Additionally, there are many clubs and social groups centered around bringing people together and joining them in fellowship. Our individuality is part of what makes us human and it's a beautiful thing but joining together in groups we belong to allows us to build relationships with those around us. It allows us to find friendship and support in struggles unique to our situations and most importantly it helps us to see that we matter. I have never felt more loved, understood, and accepted than when I'm spending time with the people I've met through the communities I belong to. These groups, all of which are campus sponsored, have helped me to realize my own worth, learn to love myself, and they've saved my life.

Equality is the belief that everyone is treated exactly the same regardless of their personal differences. Every person alive today is unique, no two people have the same opportunities, beliefs, or experiences. Equality seems like a great thing to work towards but it is actually in direct opposition to celebrating inclusion and diversity. While we should regard each other as equals in worth it is also important to acknowledge our differences and treat each other with equity. Equity is the belief that everyone should be provided with what they need to succeed. No individual should be allowed to be worse off in life because of the circumstances out of their control. In order to accomplish this it is so important to realize that some people are going to need more help and support. Everyone deserves love. Everyone deserves support. Everyone deserves equity.

How can we accomplish equity in higher education if we don't treat people differently based on their individual needs? Four year programs allow us to have freedom in choosing how we plan out our education. Scholarships help support us so we don't have to work as much while trying to juggle four years of academics. Community events and clubs allow us to find our people and gain acceptance and love. Our differences are a part of being human and it is crucial to provide training, and resources to everyone who needs them. How is it possible to support minorities without scholarships, training, and resources based on who they are? While on the surface it may seem like equality is a goal to strive for I would argue that we should instead seek equity. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote no on this bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

I will now take any questions you may have.