

Testimony of Dr. Colette T. Dollarhide, NCC, LPC-S (OH)
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair
April 17, 2023

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

My name is Dr. Colette Dollarhide, and I am a professor of Counselor Education at The Ohio State University where I have been a professor for 17 years. In total, I have 35 years as a Counselor Educator. I do not represent Ohio State University, but rather am submitting written testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

In my experience as a mental health professional and as a professor teaching graduate level counseling, I have seen the impact of bias, bigotry, and prejudice has on mental health. For persons who are not White, not straight, not middle-class, not able-bodied, not male, not Christian, life is fraught with hurdles. From outrageous acts of violence, hatred, and cruelty to everyday insults, people who are “not mainstream” face challenges that compromise their mental and physical health. When we teach our graduate students about helping others to heal, we have to teach them about the unique challenges faced by people who are not White, not straight, not middle-class, not able-bodied, not male, and not protected in our society.

In Counselor Education, our accreditation body (CACREP, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, <https://www.cacrep.org/accreditation/>) dictates that all counselors who provide mental health services in clinics, hospitals, schools, colleges, and private practice must know how to provide those services in ways that honor the reality of racism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, sexism, misogyny, xenophobia, among other horrors. Unless we are able to teach about the mental health issues of ALL CLIENTS, all the counseling programs in the State of Ohio will lose accreditation. Since our licensure law requires that only graduates of CACREP programs are eligible for licensure, *no graduates of any Ohio universities will be eligible for licensure in this state*. This means that the mental health crisis of our population will continue – resulting in more addiction, more overdoses, more school violence, more community violence -- more social, mental, and physical disease.

It is for this reason, for the mental health of our state, that I ask you to stop SB 83. We must be able to teach about controversial issues, including the mental health challenges for all members of our communities. We cannot allow the mental health crisis in Ohio to worsen.

Thank you for your consideration.