

Testimony of Kevin Cavicchi, PhD
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair
April 19th, 2023

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

My name is Kevin Cavicchi, and I am a professor of Polymer Engineering at The University of Akron, where I have taught for 17 years. I do not represent The University of Akron but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

I am opposed to the state dictating statements that must be included in an institution of higher education's mission statement.

I am generally opposed to the statements in section 3345.0217. The definition of Intellectual Diversity to "provide perspectives representative of the range of American opinion, but which are poorly represented on campus" appears not to be interested in diversity at all, but rather to promote and amplify particular ideological viewpoints.

In particular, I am opposed to Division (B) (6), which prohibits "commitment to any controversial belief or policy, specified concept." In division (A) (3) sustainability is listed as an example of a specific concept. In the field of polymer science and polymer engineering (i.e. plastics), sustainability is a driving concept in research and development. Sustainability is a central area in which companies are interested in collaborating with the University of Akron. Major federal funding programs from the Department of Energy, the Department of Commerce and the National Science Foundation are focused on sustainability. To prohibit a commitment to sustainability at the University would significantly harm the competitiveness of the University of Akron in scientific research and our ability to attract top students in these areas.

The requirements in Sec. 3345.382 (A) repeat Ohio high school graduation requirements. Section 3313.603 of the Ohio revised code already requires one half-unit of American History and one-half unit of American Government where the Constitution and Declaration of Independence are already required reading. There is no justification for why students should have to repeat this course to graduate from college.

I am opposed to the provision in Sec. 3345.0217 that prohibits mandatory programs or training regarding equity, diversity and inclusion. These programs are widely offered across industry, academia and government. To ban them at higher education institutions in Ohio would put us out of step with the rest of country and hurt the competitiveness of our institutions.

I believe that the interactions with China described in 3345.591 should be handled at the Federal level through appropriate agencies that deal with foreign policy and national security.

I disagree with the provisions in Section 4117.14 that prohibit public employees from striking. This is a fundamental right of unions and weakens workers' rights.