

Testimony of Rhett Brymer, Ph.D., M.S., M.B.A.  
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 Rhett Brymer, and I am a professor of strategic management at University of Cincinnati, where I have taught for five years, and six years at Miami University prior to that. I do not represent either UC or Miami, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

My research expertise is on the organizational implications of turnover and hiring. I also know dozens of other fellow professors – mostly in business schools – at UC and Miami, along with a handful of other professors at Ohio state institutions. Without exception, they are all opposed to SB83 because of the way it will fundamentally change their institution’s culture, its daily environment, and the intellectual freedoms of faculty.

Ohio state schools compete – nationally and internationally – for faculty, for research funding, and for students. In my field of strategic management, we know that eroding competitive advantages for a set of organizations will lead to their decline over time. Based on what I have heard from fellow faculty, eroding – or even reversing – Ohio’s state schools’ competitive advantages will be the legacy of SB83.

The reasons why this is likely to happen with SB83’s passing begin with faculty. Most faculty are mobile – the majority of professors have been educated outside the state of Ohio, and can move again outside the state. Our professional norm is an openness to moving to another institution in another location. SB83 will cause a majority of faculty in our state to question the future of education in Ohio, and more specifically, the health of their particular institutions. The perception of cultural shifts and stripping of intellectual freedoms that Ohio’s faculty see in SB83 will cause much discontent. The best and brightest faculty will have options to move elsewhere, and many will – to institutions (and states) that do not have governmental overreach into institutions of higher education.

We know through decades of research that unequivocally demonstrates that 1) collective turnover will increase with these perceived shifts in culture and intellectual freedom, perhaps sharply, 2) attracting the best faculty to Ohio’s schools will be much more difficult, and 3) recovering will be very difficult from this sea-shift in workplace culture that SB83 is likely to bring. Faculty are the most important determinant of university rankings and research grants, both of which will likely decline in the face of the brain-drain that this bill will prompt. The cascading effects of losing top faculty are also likely to include losing the best students to out-of-state competitors, including the extraordinary students that drive the world class programs such as UC’s CCM or Ohio State football.

In sum, this bill is extremely unpopular with faculty, and its passing will do immediate and long-term damage to Ohio’s institutions of higher learning. Many of the best and brightest faculty – and all they bring to the institutions they work for – will leave the state permanently. The bill will also make attracting and hiring equal-quality replacements next to impossible. Please consider these unintended consequences of SB83, as the harm to Ohio’s universities and constituencies they support – local communities and businesses – has the potential to spread far and last for decades.