

17. April 2023

Dear Esteemed Senators,

I believe in education. I believe it is the cornerstone of our democracy. I believe that a well educated citizenry makes the world a better place for all people---for all people, not just the select few who are in power.

I also care about the state of Ohio. I have lived here for 15 years and am raising my child here. I have found an unabashed love of neighbors, of communities, of schools, of sports teams, of city, of state, and of nation in all the people I meet in Ohio. I believe Ohio is a place of earnestness, full of people who want to do the right thing.

I also believe the state of Ohio has a long history of a strong devotion to higher education. Some of the finest universities in the nation are in Ohio. These universities are filled with the Ohio spirit of solving problems, caring for communities, and improving the lives of everyone in the state. With worldclass sports teams that match the worldclass research and teaching underway in these excellent universities, Ohio has long been a place with great pride in its system of higher education.

This bill, SB 83, will endanger all of this. It aims to threaten the very heart of education—namely, the courage to encounter things that are *different* from us.

The history of higher education in Ohio is similar to the history across the United States and the world. Since their foundings, universities have been primarily a place to educate the elite. This runs against the core principles of democracy and, across the late 20th century, the gates of the university were broken down. From the GI Bill following WWII to the various parts of the Civil Rights Movement, we have seen the ongoing democratizing of higher education in the United States. Universities are no longer the exclusive club of the elite: everyone—literally every single background and community—is now able to become educated at this highest level.

When this happens, when a longstanding elite institution becomes democratized, the standard practices are challenged. For higher education, this has entailed a broadening of the histories and cultures that are researched and taught beyond just those of the elite. In this globalized world, this breadth of education is crucial to the ongoing fundamental principle of the university—namely, to educate for citizenship.

SB 83 wants to turn back the clock. It wants to erase the progress towards democracy that is the heartbeat of the United States of America.

I believe one unfortunate ambition drives SB 83: fear. Fear of difference, fear of losing control, fear of a more democratic university and society. But the current generation of university

students is not afraid. They are reared in the era of school shootings and widespread social unrest. They understand the profound challenges upon all of us, including the possible unraveling of our democracy. And they are not afraid.

If you pass this SB 83, you will signal clearly to all Ohioans and all Americans—especially young people in Ohio—that you are afraid. And the young people will respond: they will take their brave, innovative spirits to another state, where progress is still alive.

Ohio already has a falling birth-rate and struggles to keep its young people in Ohio: this bill will not only undermine the excellence of universities in Ohio, but will cause a total exodus and the end of economic development in Ohio.

This is a very dangerous bill for the entire state of Ohio: I strongly oppose it and hope you will not give in to the fear-mongering that animates it.

Sincerely,

Shannon Winnubst