

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 Amy Blankenship. I am a licensed professional clinical counselor in the State of OH and work for The University of Cincinnati's Counseling and Psychological Services. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House. This bill will be detrimental to the college success and mental health of the students I serve. I sit with several students a week to assist them in repairing and healing from the damage that so many oppressive systems have caused. Being able to help individuals connect with others that have shared similar experiences, increases their sense of belonging and keeps them from feeling isolated. The current research based on the Polyvagal theory states that human connection is the most impactful experience one can have for their positive mental health success, which also leads to better academic success. If this bill passes, there will be an increase in suicide and student drop out. Please, I beg you, we can not take away resources that assist students feeling a sense of belonging, nor mandated education regarding the historical truths of our marginalized populations. My work is hard enough with the resources available, and this is someone speaking from a point of privilege.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this disgusting and dangerous bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.