

April 18th, 2023

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee;

Thank you for reading my testimony.

My name is Amber Franklin. I am a Certified Speech-Language Pathologist, licensed in the State of Ohio, and an Associate Professor in the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at Miami University, where I have worked for 12 years. I write to you today as an educator and private citizen and I do not represent Miami University as an institution.

I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House because of the deleterious effects it will have on the viability and reputation of health science programs throughout our state.

Speech Pathology and Audiology graduate programs receive accreditation through the Council on Academic Accreditation (CAA). CAA creates standards that academic programs must meet in order to gain and maintain accreditation. In 2023, CAA instituted a revised accreditation standard (standard 3.4A/B) titled "Diversity Reflected in The Curriculum." Here is an example of some of the standards:

“The program must provide evidence that diversity, equity, and inclusion are incorporated throughout the academic and clinical program, in theory and practice.”

“The program must provide evidence that students are given opportunities to identify and acknowledge the impact of both implicit and explicit bias on clinical service delivery and actively explore individual biases and how they relate to clinical services.”

There are 14 Communication Sciences and Disorders programs in Ohio. If these programs cannot comply with accreditation standards—because of this disastrous bill—their accreditation will be at risk. Miami University has recently invested millions of dollars in a new Health Sciences Building, which will be occupied by Speech Pathology and Audiology, Nursing, and a Physician Assistant program. Why would our state invest so mightily in health science programs that lead to stable and secure jobs, only to pass legislation that would jeopardize their accreditation status and diminish their national reputation?

I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 83 because of the deleterious effects it will have on my students' preparation to engage with a broad and diverse patient population.

It has been my joy to educate Miami students for the past 12 years. Through my expertise, they learn about speech sound disorders in children and counseling strategies for clients with communication disorders. I teach a course about language, dialect, and identity—a subject that invariably intersects with markers such as race, gender, and national origin. I teach my students that implicit bias is part of the human condition—and we are all human. Therefore, we must all apply a lens of cultural humility as we learn about ourselves, each other, and our clients. I teach my students about surface diversity, those aspects that seem readily apparent, like race—and

deep diversity, those aspects of diversity that we uncover once we learn about each other's backgrounds, views, and beliefs.

Through the diversity papers I have assigned in my courses, I have learned about my students—beyond the surface. Additionally, my students have used these assignments as opportunities to learn more about others—and themselves. When a white student with Appalachian roots writes about the stigmatization of people who speak Appalachian English dialects, she is writing a paper on diversity. When she notes that speech language pathologists should learn about the richness and value of Appalachian dialects without pathologizing those dialects, she is making a statement about equity and inclusion. Is that topic less “controversial” than a paper written about the stigmatization of African American English and the responsibility clinicians have to learn about that dialect?

I ask you to consider my written testimony and **vote NO** on this destructive bill that will undermine the investment Ohio has made in its health science programs—and in the state's future healthcare workers.

Sincerely,

Amber D. Franklin, Ph.D., CCC-SLP