

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

Thank you all for allowing me to testify here before you today. My name is Emma Damron. I am a 22 year old transgender student at the University of Cincinnati, and I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House.

As you may know, one of the provisions in Senate Bill 83 forbids the organization of extracurricular groups by basis of identity in higher education. I am a longstanding member of one of such these groups, the university's transgender and nonbinary affinity group. I speak for myself and I believe the rest of the members within this affinity group that these organizations are of great benefit to the student body and should not be dismantled.

This affinity group's community presented itself to me in a time of need. I had just returned to my education during the COVID-19 pandemic after almost a year away due to my mental health. From the isolating pressures of the pandemic and the academic pressures of my curriculum, I had developed suicidal ideation and took a year off to work and attend therapy. I had rejoined at my university under my therapist's recommendation to seek out said transgender affinity group as a means of building community where I had none before.

And through this group have I found much greater stability, community, and meaning. My wellbeing today is vastly improved over how it was when I first returned to university or even a year ago. I do not think my story is fundamentally unique. Finding community and place in the world is a major component of young adult life. These spaces provide unique opportunity to do so with threads of common understanding and experiences. I have seen students who would otherwise literally be starving, be able to be fed because of the goodwill and support of these communities.

As my very existence as a transgender person would also become illegal to teach about under this bill as it is considered a "controversial specified concept" these spaces are needed now more than ever.

I feel I cannot elucidate my full concerns and grievances within the time I have on the floor today. The restriction of other basic and progressive topics from education, the banning of faculty and staff striking, and the expulsion of Chinese foreign exchange students are all other reasons I oppose this bill.

I hope you consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill which will directly harm our fellow Ohioans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify; I will now gladly take any questions you may have.