

Testimony of Brian Leingang, M. A.  
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair  
April 18, 2023

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

My name is Brian Leingang, and I am a professor of English at Edison State Community College, where I have taught for 16 years. I do not represent Edison State, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

I teach 5-6 sections of composition each semester with an average of 15 students in each class. For the majority of my students, my class is their first experience in a college classroom. My goal is to make sure students receive quality instruction that meets their needs and fulfills the goals of the course. Many of these goals involve critical thinking, conducting research, and analyzing arguments. These are skills people need in order to be strong employees, business owners, and citizens in Ohio.

Senate Bill 83 will make the teaching of critical thinking and analysis more difficult. Because students won't have a structured environment to explore issues that matter to them, but are listed as controversial by SB 83. When I teach research and argument, I coach students to analyze and issue from different perspectives, to find opposing arguments to break down, and to use research and logic to support their arguments. Students are motivated by their need to understand an issue that has often only been presented to them as one sided. Without the freedom to select a topic of their choosing, I fear their work will suffer. Furthermore, students will find themselves less prepared to live in a world that is increasingly divided.

I worry that Senate Bill 83 assumes the worst about Ohio students and faculty. Our news and social media is filled with stories that portray a college education as indoctrination. I had a student, a veteran of the Air Force, who began my class prepared to stand up against everything he had heard on social media about colleges. Instead, he found a supporting environment and an encouraging professor. At the end of the class, he told me of his bias and preconceived notions. This sort of conversation wouldn't be able to happen under SB 83 because I would have been forced to limit this student's choice of research topics and silence him on issues that matter to him.

I hope Senators will vote against Senate Bill 83 and trust the students and colleges to do what is best for education.

Thank you for your time,

Brian Leingang