



April 19, 2023 | Testimony in opposition to SB83 | Senate Workforce & Higher Education Committee

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to SB 83, a bill that would harm higher education institutions and make them less welcoming and tolerant places for marginalized communities.

Equality Ohio is a statewide education and advocacy organization dedicated to pursuing lived and legal equality for LGBTQ+ Ohioans. As advocates for LGBTQ+ people and their families, we work to ensure that our community's freedoms are protected, and that includes the freedom to get an education in a safe and tolerant learning environment, the freedom to organize, and the freedom to openly discuss our own lives and identities without being subjected to government censorship or even professional discipline.

With similar curriculum censorship to last year's Don't Say Gay Don't Mention Race bills, this proposed bill is expansive in the worst way. It proposes vague bans that would upend educators' ability to talk about race and gender in classrooms, and by extension greatly increase the risk that professors could be targeted or even reprimanded for teaching honest history. It also proposes a total ban on affinity organizations, student clubs, and professional trainings for employees, and extends as far as prohibiting police officers, firefighters, and public employees from exercising their right to strike.

Even if unintentional, this bill is so expansive that it would dramatically chill speech and extracurricular activities on campus, and substantially harm the college experience for students and administrators alike. It's very hard to overstate the broad prohibitions and the potential harm to state institutions of higher education if this were to become law. One clause illustrates how any affinity group, religious group, sport, or other crucial parts of the college experience would be entirely banned: "Each state institution shall prohibit all policies designed explicitly to segregate faculty, staff, or students by group identities such as race, sex, gender identity, or gender expression, including in orientations, majors, financial awards, residential housing, administrative employment, faculty employment, student training, extracurricular activities, and graduations."

This bill also serves as an onerous attack on workers' rights for public employees by entirely prohibiting employees from striking. SB 83 specifically instructs that "public employees shall not strike" and specifies that that includes police officers, school employees, even "youth leaders employed at juvenile correctional facilities."



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This bill would not protect families, students, or staff, and instead would be bad for the economy, bad for freedom of speech and expression and even freedom of association.

Please vote no on SB83.

Thank you,

Maria Bruno
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Equality Ohio