

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

My name is Kathy Johnson. Thank you for the opportunity to present my thoughts in support of Senate Bill 83. I am grateful to Senator Jerry Cirino for introducing this vital legislation. There is no more important mission in Ohio than to reclaim a strong academic mission in higher education. Our universities and community colleges must provide quality education and marketable skills to all students.

It is an unfortunate and correctable fact that our universities and colleges have increasingly turned to an educational model that increasingly focuses on social engineering rather than academic excellence. To be clear, it is entirely possible to treat all students with the respect without accentuating differences and creating social hierarchies of supposed injustice that inhibit critical thinking and free speech. It is time to recognize that the mandated and purposeful institutionalization of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has itself become a springboard for divisive concepts. It is not the role of higher education to demand thought or language conformity. In fact, it is essential to provide an atmosphere of intellectual tolerance, free speech, and critical thinking.

It is of utmost importance that universities and colleges return to the expectation that a degree will provide students with the skills to achieve a source of income that will make the cost and effort of a college education worthwhile.

Below is a very interesting quotation from a recent bipartisan poll that should be sobering as Ohioans and elected members of the Ohio Legislature as we consider the future of higher education:

“A majority of Americans don’t think a college degree is worth the cost, according to a new [Wall Street Journal-NORC poll](#), a new low in confidence in what has long been a hallmark of the American dream.

The survey, conducted with NORC at the University of Chicago, a nonpartisan research organization, found that 56% of Americans think earning a four-year degree is a bad bet compared with 42% who retain faith in the credential.

Skepticism is strongest among people ages 18-34, and people with college degrees are among those whose opinions have soured the most, portending a profound shift for higher education in the years ahead.”

I believe that passing Senate Bill 83 as introduced is a critical first step in preserving higher education and promoting meaningful workforce development. Stopping the harmful financial and cultural shift into social engineering and collective thinking in our colleges and universities is essential. Please support and prioritize Senate Bill 83.