

Testimony of Jo El J. Schultz, PhD,

Director of Graduate Studies in Pharmacology, Director of the Summer Undergraduate Research Program

Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair

April 19, 2023

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

My name is Jo El Schultz, and I am an Associate Professor of Pharmacology at the University of Cincinnati, College of Medicine, where I have taught in the medical and graduate curriculum for 22 years. I do not represent the University of Cincinnati nor the College of Medicine, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

I am speaking on my behalf as a scientific researcher and educator that Senate Bill 83 will not increase intellectual diversity (lines 188-192, and as stated throughout the bill) as implied but will, in fact, restrict intellectual diversity. Although SB83 states to “affirm and guarantee that its primary function is to practice, or support the practice, discovery, improvement, transmission, and dissemination of knowledge by means of research, teaching, discussion, and debate” (line 210-212), it will restrict my ability to practice my profession as an educator and a research scientist in higher education. This bill will limit (to name a few) the exposure to and discussion of: 1) research and medical topics that relate to racial and gender inequities in medical treatment/care, 2) lack of representation of women, people of color in biomedical sciences and other areas of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), 3) implementation to overcome barriers of scientific mistrust in the drug discovery process, 4) drug products that affect racial minority health or people who can become pregnant for a range of diseases including cardiovascular. These discussions occur in classroom lectures in the medical and graduate curriculum; these discussions occur in faculty meetings; these discussions occur at student organizations. This then would reduce the intellectual diversity exposure of the student body and not as stated in the bill, “the institution shall ensure the fullest degree of intellectual diversity” (line 214-215). It is unclear to me as an educator why this bill is even up for consideration in the State of Ohio. Eleven years ago, the American Council on Education in published a report in 2012 that indicated: 1) “Diversity enriches the educational experience”, 2) “It promotes personal growth and a healthy society”, 3) “It strengthens communities and the workplace”, and 4) It enhances America’s economic competitiveness. Furthermore, as an educator that interacts with faculty, staff, and undergraduate, medical, and graduate students from a wide range of racial/ethnic backgrounds, religious or spiritual beliefs, life experiences, socioeconomic status, this SB83 would limit their collective voices in higher education training and in community.

As a research scientist who has been funded by the National Institutes of Health, the American Heart Association, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturer's of American Foundation which all support diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in the research and educational training of students, my research program as well as that of other faculty would be significantly impacted which then would impact the economic health of the University and of the State of Ohio. The University of Cincinnati research community secured \$268.3 million in extramural funding in fiscal year 2021-2022. Also, it has been demonstrated in the business world "the desire to associate with similar people can bring social benefits to those who exhibit it, including a sense of shared culture and belonging; yet, it can also lead investors and firms to leave a lot of money on the table" (Harvard Business News July/August 2018). These would be missed opportunities for diversity in the corporate, healthcare, and education sectors.

My voice, academic freedom, and ability to practice my profession would be significantly impacted if SB83 is passed. I appreciate the Committee Members' time and thank all of you for your consideration to not approve this bill to move forward.