



**Opponent Testimony of Rachael Collyer, Ohio Student Association  
Senate Bill 83  
Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
April 19th, 2023**

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

My name is Rachael Collyer, and in addition to being a lifelong Ohio resident and a graduate of the Ohio State University, I am the program director of the Ohio Student Association (OSA). OSA is a statewide grassroots organization with student-led chapters at nine college campuses across the state, bringing together young Ohioans from different backgrounds and with different experiences to imagine and fight for a better future.

One of the core focuses of our organization is supporting college students to make their voices heard around higher education policy. In the weeks since Senate Bill 83 was introduced, we have had numerous conversations with our members and other students on campuses across the state about this bill. Students are deeply concerned about this legislation and what its passing would mean for our campuses and classrooms.

As Ohioans from different walks of life, we value education as a critical mechanism of upward social mobility. Having high-performing and competitive universities that set students up to succeed is central to this vision. Also key is having diverse opinions and backgrounds represented in the classroom, without censoring meaningful topics and issues. Intellectual diversity should not, and in fact cannot, come at the cost of academic freedom and critical thinking. It is NOT intellectual diversity to mandate a presentation of 'both sides' for something like climate change, where there is an overwhelming scientific consensus<sup>1</sup> (lines 183-187 & 216-219). For the state to restrict discussion on a scientific insight because a handful of politicians arbitrarily decided it was 'too controversial' is unethical and harmful to our institutions.

If this bill is passed, institutions will not be allowed to "endorse, oppose, comment, or take action" (lines 229-230) with regard to concepts like "sustainability," "inclusion," "allyship," and "diversity" (lines 193-195). To be sustainable, to be diverse, to be inclusive, are not and should not be considered inherently "controversial" things, but values that our universities should be striving for.

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<sup>1</sup><https://climate.nasa.gov/faq/17/do-scientists-agree-on-climate-change/#:~:text=Yes%2C%20the%20vast%20majority%20of,global%20warming%20and%20climate%20change>.



The bill insists that institutions will enforce “equality of opportunity” but acts to dismantle existing programs that seek to create that equality of opportunity (Sec. 3345.0216 line 181 and Sec. 3345.87 line 640), for instance by attacking mandated diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings or DEI programs (Line 28 of the bill, Sec. 3345.0216). Different students face very different types and degrees of challenges. A ‘one size fits all’ approach causes so many students to fall through the cracks who could have otherwise been better situated and supported. DEI programs are about student success for underrepresented populations, and creating resources to aid these students. This does not disadvantage or discriminate against other students. Ohioans understand that we all benefit when we all, regardless of income or race, have the opportunity to fulfill our maximum potential. When all students have the ability to participate in classes and thrive on campus, they can contribute to *real* intellectual diversity.

It is common sense that universities should be implementing and adapting programs and policies to improve graduation rates and other indicators of success, and that some demographics of students struggle more than others, not because they aren’t as hardworking or deserving, but because they tend to face certain problems and limitations that their peers may not. For instance, Black students are less likely than their white counterparts to have parental financial assistance (since the median household income is lower for Black families) and more likely to be first-generation college students.<sup>2</sup>

This bill is loaded with examples of government overreach and unnecessary restrictions that would hurt students and staff alike, such as prohibiting all employees of any state institution of higher education from striking. Students stand in solidarity with professors and university staff, and many students are in fact university employees themselves. OSA and Ohio students vehemently oppose this attack on workers’ rights.

With college enrollment already suffering from the recent pandemic, we cannot afford to make education more costly, more restrictive, and less supportive to our students. This bill would put Ohio’s students at a disadvantage by censoring important topics and dismantling critical programs used to support the student body so that all students can thrive, regardless of income or race. SB 83 is contradictory to our values as an organization and as Ohioans. On behalf of all of the members of the Ohio Student Association, we urge committee members and legislators to prioritize student interests and vote no on this bill before it can harm our institutions and our future as a state.

Thank you.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://pnpi.org/first-generation-students/>