

Senate Bill 83 Testimony Madison Mason
Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 83
Senate Committee on Workforce and Higher Education
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Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Madison Mason and today I am speaking as a representative for the over 50,000 students from the Ohio State University to convey to you some data we collected from our students about issues and sentiments that pertain to Senate Bill 83. Understanding the implications that this bill would potentially have on higher education for students across the state, we leaders within the student population wanted to get a better understanding of how Ohio State students feel about their ability to express their ideas, diversity equity, and inclusion training, and sentiments surrounding the university's role in the free exchange of ideas. Senate Bill 83 if passed has the potential to greatly impact college student's education so we feel it is important that you have an understanding of what students think about the current state of higher education.

We were able to survey around 1500 students.

First, because of the implications that this bill might have for free speech we wanted to get a better understanding of students' ability to freely express their beliefs on campus. 77.5 % of students said that they feel safe to express their political ideologies on campus regardless of political preference. I ask that you consider this fact when evaluating this bill that has the potential to greatly limit students ability to express their political beliefs in classroom settings which directly impacts their first amendment rights.

Along that line with the understanding that the vast majority of students are in fact comfortable expressing their political beliefs on campus, we also wanted to gather information on if students feel Ohio State tries to teach or guide them to think and believe specific political beliefs. Often there are sentiments that institutions of higher education seek to impose liberal beliefs on students and indoctrinate young people so we wanted to see if students felt that their education was biased. 80% of students do not believe the Ohio State faculty, staff, administration, or overall academic curriculum seek to impose certain political beliefs upon them. The majority of students surveyed believe that Ohio State as an institution of higher learning facilitates an environment where students are able to learn about topic free of bias, and the university facilitates extracurricular events for students and people of all beliefs, with the most cited example being the recent event held at Ohio State with popular conservative figures Charlie Kirk and Candace Owens in which hundreds of people were able to attend, safely and freely share ideas at Ohio State.

Lastly, due to the serious implications that this bill has the potential to have on mandatory diversity, equity, and inclusion training in higher education, we wanted to see how meaningful DEI training has been to students at Ohio State so we could gauge the positive or negative impact that the trainings have. It is also important to acknowledge that diversity, equity, and inclusion at Ohio State is incumbent of a variety of identities including those which pertain to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, socio-economic status, religion, and first-gen status. Also for a variety of our DEI programs at Ohio State like for example Morrill Scholars, diversity in thought is what is emphasized not necessarily diversity in actual individual identities.

Out of 1539 students surveyed, 1287 said that Ohio State's DEI education, efforts, and programs were meaningful in some way, whether it be somewhat meaningful, moderately meaningful, or extremely meaningful. While almost 85% of the total students surveyed said that DEI was meaningful in some way a resounding 45% of respondents said that DEI at Ohio State was extremely meaningful to their college experience. DEI programming has been incredibly beneficial and impactful to our students, and I ask that you consider the overwhelming positive impact that these programs have on Ohio State Students and college students as a whole when evaluating this bill which has the potential to drastically reduce and change that impactful DEI training that the vast majority of our student.

Overall, I hope that my testimony has given you some insight into how college students actually feel about some of the concerns that seek to be resolved by SB 83 and I hope that when considering this bill which if passed, will change the college experiences of thousands of students across the state that you actually consider what students want and how they feel about their own education. Though it is important to always have thoughtful conversations about higher education I hope that we can be more intentional with consulting students who are in college. Thank you so much for allowing me to speak on behalf of the students of Ohio State, and have a great day!