

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

My name is Emily Hill and I am a senior at The University of Akron. Although I will graduate this spring with a B.A. in History, I will return to campus in the fall for The University's History M.A. program. As a History student, I stand firmly in opposition to Senate Bill 83. Supporters of this bill claim it protects intellectual diversity and freedom of speech; however, it will do the opposite. Professors will be unable to discuss important historical events and issues for fear of being perceived as biased or making students uncomfortable. History is uncomfortable. No country recognizes its own faults as much as it should; however, discussing these uncomfortable topics is the only way to make progress towards a better future for our youth.

In my History courses, we have had to discuss controversial topics. I want to emphasize that these discussions have always been open, honest, and welcoming to a wide variety of student viewpoints. Sometimes, I was uncomfortable because the reality of certain historical events and structures can be horrifying. Any discomfort during these class discussions was worth it though, because I emerged with a better understanding of how the historical events have impacted our society today and empathy for those who may still be feeling the lasting effects of such events. I am a better citizen and a more empathetic person because of my education — because of these difficult discussions about race, gender, sexuality, and other topics that some may consider “controversial”.

The language of this bill may make professors shy away from discussing honest history with their students. Without discussing the uncomfortable realities of our history, future generations will grow up with less empathy, critical thinking skills, and be less likely

to make positive changes in our country. One of the best ways we can better our state for future generations is to encourage awareness about diversity, equity, and inclusion, and have discussions about uncomfortable, “controversial” topics. As a student and Ohio citizen, I implore you to vote no against this bill that will greatly hinder the ability for future Ohioians to create a more empathetic and just society.

Thank you for your time,

Emily Hill