

Testimony of Dr. Marc Bockrath, Ph.D.  
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair  
April 18, 2023

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

My name is Marc Bockrath, and I am a professor of Physics at The Ohio State University, where I have taught for 6 years. I do not represent OSU, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

I am writing this personal testimony in regard to State bill 83. Part of bill 83 (Sections 3345.451, 3345.452, and 3345.453 (lines 409-520 in the current bill) describes legislation to require post-tenure reviews, a de facto elimination of tenure protections.

**Academic tenure forms the cornerstone of academic freedom.** I can think of three examples right away that show the value of academic freedom. The first is Professor Andrew Wiles of Princeton University. He published little or nothing for many years, which would possibly result in dismissal within several years under the proposed system. This is because he was taking great risks working on proving Fermat's last theorem, a theorem that had remain only conjecture for centuries. His work gained widespread recognition and many awards including the prestigious MacArthur Fellowship. The second is the invention of the maser by Charles Townes, an early precursor to the laser which many thought to be implausible at the time. Finally, there is the Josephson junction discovered by Brian Josephson, also thought by many to be impossible before it was proven otherwise. The Josephson junction now plays a critical role in quantum computers, while the laser is now ubiquitous even in everyday life. Both Townes and Josephson received Nobel prizes for their work. Many other examples exist.

The point is that **without academic freedom, few if anyone would be able to take the big risks necessary to make major discoveries.** It seems clear eliminating tenure and thereby academic freedom would strongly curtail a culture that is currently able to engage in high-risk/high reward ventures. The decline of research in the state of Ohio is not merely academic but **could be readily expected to have real-world consequences such as the diminishment of federal research dollars going to the state in competitive grants.**

**Another issue is that the necessarily "safe" research performed without academic freedom may translate to promoting wrong or false results in politicized areas.** Pressure could come from for example program managers or even college administrators to get the "right" results. Society clearly depends on objective science for many of its medical, military, and commercial activities.

Moreover, **if Ohio repeals tenure** while other states, such as Michigan, Illinois and many others retain their protections for academic freedom, **recruitment and retention of high quality faculty is likely to become much more difficult.** Higher education in the state of Ohio would most likely become second-rate. This is especially an issue when trying to attract further and prolonged investment by high technology corporations such as Intel. For these reasons, I believe this bill would likely cause serious and possibly irreparable harm to higher education and research in Ohio, and I urge you to vote no on this bill.