

Hello speaker Chairman Cirino and the workforce and higher education committee. My name is Madison Earnest, and I am here as a voter of the 25th Senate district who is vehemently against SB83.

For context, I was born to a family of Ohio veterans that are as patriotic as they come. But patriotism and a genuine love for your country require holding your home accountable so that it can improve and grow. As someone with a deep love and appreciation for Ohio, I write to say that SB 83 will not only prevent Ohio from growing but will actively harm Ohioans. So I would like to address what this bill plans to do for DEI programs, discussion of “controversial” topics, and policies on employee strikes.

First, this bill plans to “prohibit any mandatory programs or training courses regarding diversity, equity, or inclusion.” But mandatory DEI programs provided by the Ohio State University, like implicit bias training, DEI general education requirements, and more, have allowed me to challenge the world I was raised in while validating the worth of my unique experience. Further, these programs have armed me with the skills to empathize, understand, and work with people different than myself as I pursue a career as a public servant.

Further, this bill aims to ban higher education institutions from acting on “controversial belief or policy” such as “climate change, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs...” and more. However, this language is concerning as a student because topics of “political controversy” could also include the University’s response to nearby homelessness, food deserts and insecurity, and public safety. My reasoning behind this concern is that these issues deal with power (a defining feature of politics) and debated responses to these issues that are incredibly controversial. However, if this bill had been enacted before I saw the University’s responses to these issues, there would be more conflict involving homelessness without OSU’s action in changing the locations of warming centers, I would not have access to affordable nutrition at Buckeye food alliance, and I would feel unsafe on campus without involving student solutions to public safety.

The last issue I want to address is SB 83’s provision banning “prohibits state institution of higher education employees from striking.” While this bill does offer alternatives to striking, like The Public Employees’ Collective Bargaining Law, this bill ignores why strikes occur. Strikes are organized through the hard work of employees to stand against institutions of power when established processes (such as The Public Employees’ Collective Bargaining Law) fail. Further, the right to strike, boycott, and organize is an American right that led to the creation of labor unions that protected American families in mining, education, and now food service

industries. This right is essential to protect as Ohioans must be able to organize and strike when they feel their treatment is unjust.

To conclude, many of these provisions in SB 83 (such as DEI programs, controversial topics, and policies on employee strikes) would actively harm my experience as a student at the Ohio State University. Further, it is clear as a student that these solutions aim to solve problems of intellectual individualism that are not an issue on campus. But by creating this bill, these senators are attempting to overstep their role and influence an institution that should have the intellectual and administrative freedom that makes Ohio Universities great. Therefore, I urge members of this committee to refrain from introducing this bill to the Senate floor because of the out-of-touch solutions that will actively harm the experiences of higher education students, faculty, and staff.

Thank you,

Madison Earnest