

Testimony of Jan Nesor, PhD
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 Jan Nesor, and I am a professor of Education Policy at the Ohio State University. I do not represent Ohio State, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

There is much to address in SB83, but it needs to be put into context. It is one of a set of proposed bills that would transform education in Ohio. Other legislation includes SB1, the state take-over of the State Board of Education and the restructuring and vocationalization of the Department of Education; SB17, which would create state education standards and model curricula for "financial literacy" in "Free Market Capitalism"; HB1, which would gut the tax base for school funding; HB11/SB11, the "universal voucher" program designed to destroy neighborhood- and community-based schooling and undermine the public education system; HB6, an attack on transgender students, which would deny transgender girls and women the right to participate in school athletics; HB8, a so-called parental bill of rights which is in fact an attack on transgender youth; HB103, which would remake Ohio K-12 social studies curricula based on the right-wing extremist version of history in the *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*, and others. What is common across such proposals is their suppression of intellectual diversity – they all align tightly with right-wing fundamentalist perspectives -- and their commitment to weakening or destroying the public schools as collective instruments of learning and expression.

SB83 would reinforce this barrage at the summit of the educational system by undermining challenging curricula, suppressing political expression, disrupting research practice, and destabilizing working conditions and the worker rights of faculty members and staff. It would shift more money from instruction to administration and expand an already overly-robust bureaucracy. It is a less physically violent version of the attacks on universities by authoritarian regimes that have become commonplace globally.¹

The negative consequences of these efforts will unfold over many years. In the short run state universities will lose status, their ability to attract top faculty members and students, and access to key streams of funding. The longer term implications are more uncertain but perhaps more dire. Critical issues will be excluded or marginalized in curricula for fear of attracting sanctions, producing graduates less able to understand and respond to fast-changing political, economic, and environment contexts. Students' understanding of the scientific consensus on key topics will be undermined by mechanical requirements for 'diversity.'

Whatever short-term political advantage one might gain from supporting SB83 is more than outweighed by the harm such legislation will do. I urge you to vote 'no' on SB83.

Sincerely,
Jan Nesor

¹ For example: <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/resources/free-to-think-2022/>
<https://eua2022.protectingeducation.org/#title>