

SAY NO TO SENATE BILL 83

Testimony by Campaign for Our Shared Future

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

The Campaign for our Shared Future (COSF) believes all young people should learn to think independently—and to face the real world. Senate Bill (SB) 83 would undermine this goal, which is why we strongly urge you to vote no on this proposal. Education should introduce our children to our functioning society and teaches them to live within it and continue to make it more perfect. That is what sets Ohio—and our country—apart.

SB 83 Bolsters Extremists and Political Games

We must not let students become political pawns. SB 83 opens the floodgates to campus speakers who espouse racist, antisemitic, and other odious or violent beliefs. **Ohio is already home to an alleged “Nazi homeschooling group.” Does this committee want Ohio to be the home of Nazi curriculum and speakers in higher education in the name of so-called “intellectual diversity” that is actually harmful to Ohio’s future?** Racist, antisemitic, and fascist ideology must be stopped, NOT bolstered.

SB 83 Censors Age-Relevant Education

There is a widely expressed concern that our country is being harmed by new generations of college students that demand to be sheltered from hearing concepts they do not like. Yet, this bill does exactly that by trying to “rescue” college students, master’s students, Ph.D. candidates, and public servants of all ages from DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) training. **We must teach students to lean into discomfort and difficult conversations, not run away from them.**

SB 83’s Targeting of “Diversity and Inclusion” is un-American

The American Dream stands upon the notion that we are all equal. Young people learn to put that into practice in schools and in higher education. Yet SB 83 targets programming that teaches students and faculty how to create safe and inclusive learning spaces for ALL students. **This leads us down a slippery slope. If we ban teaching about inclusion, will we ban teaching about Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks or and other civil rights leaders who fought for inclusion to make our country stronger?** We need to learn from the past to forge a better future. Look at what we overcame to get to where we are today. This is what makes this country exceptional.

SB 83 Impacts ALL Students

This proposal puts historically Black, Latinx, and multicultural fraternities and sororities on the chopping block. Programming for low-income students, first-generation college students, disabled students, students who are parents, and veterans, and “any group identity” could also

be affected. **Targeted supports and programming are NOT a zero sum game. ALL students deserve unique support that aligns with their circumstances and needs.**

Civil Rights Laws Alone are Not Enough

The sponsor of SB 83 says that civil rights laws sufficiently protect students from discrimination, yet DEI programs help institutions abide by these laws. **We need more inclusive learning, not less. Indeed, the U.S. Education Department's Office for Civil Rights logged an alarming increase in the number of civil rights complaints during the last fiscal year.** The office received nearly 19,000 complaints between Oct. 1, 2021, and Sept. 30, 2022, more than double the previous year and breaking the record of 16,000 filed in fiscal year 2016, according to figures provided by the department.ⁱ It's clear that laws alone do not deter discrimination or ensure ALL students have access to safe and inclusive learning environments.

SB 83 Will Sow Division and Hatred

DEI programming and diversity statements have nothing to do with political views and everything to do with fostering a safe and inclusive atmosphere for ALL groups of people, regardless of their gender, race and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, religions, cultures, ages, sexual orientations. **Fear mongering about innocuous and necessary programs will sow division, confusion, and turmoil for Ohio's college students.** Our universities and colleges are much more than helping students with personal achievement; they are about preparing people to work together to advance not just themselves but society.

SB 83 Encourages Witch Hunts

By requiring public reviews of faculty "bias," SB 83 encourages witch hunts into the private and personal opinions of faculty, neither of which impact their expertise or instruction in the classroom. SB 83 will drive talented professors away from Ohio, scaring away innovation and making the state's universities and colleges less competitive than those around the country. **Let's talk about the best education for our children instead of scoring political points.**

SB 83 Is Bad for Business

Diversity is increasingly a core value and commitment that companies prioritize. Companies understand that having diverse viewpoints at all levels of an organization improves financial results, organizational and team performance, innovation and other areas of the business.ⁱⁱ By policing classroom speech on a wide range of topics labeled "controversial," and targeting inclusion programming, **SB 83 takes away students' opportunity to develop key life skills and become the future of Ohio's workforce.**

SB 83 Creates Red Tape

This proposal would shift money, time, and resources away from students and toward red tape. Rather than creating more bureaucracy and wasting tax dollars, we need to focus resources on helping students succeed.

ⁱ Strife in the Schools: Education Dept. Logs Record Number of Discrimination Complaints, *The New York Times*, Jan 1, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/01/us/politics/education-discrimination.html>

ⁱⁱ Diversity wins: How inclusion matters, McKinsey & Company, 2020, <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters>