

April 18, 2023

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

My name is Molly Szucs. I am a junior at Miami University, where I study Art Education, Spanish, and Latin American Studies. I am the product of Ohio public schools. I am the child of an Ohio public educator, and due to the impact of my education, I myself am a prospective Ohio educator. My Ohio education has shaped who I am and has allowed me to become an educated, free thinker who contributes to society. Senate Bill 83 puts the potential of future students at risk, sheltering them from relevant, topical issues that keep our society moving forward. I am an Ohioan, born and raised, and I vehemently believe in the potential of Ohioans, and it is obvious that this bill puts our futures at risk.

Preventing higher education from operating as it has been for generations will prevent students from becoming free thinkers. It fully prevents students from getting a multi-faceted, diverse education which serves as one of the main missions of most public universities. Preventing educators from approaching “controversial” real-world topics such as gender studies, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and critical race theory fully erases the intersectionality that is vital for preparing students for the future. This bill is a regression of generations and makes a mockery of the public education I value and have always been proud of. Beyond the fact that this bill will destroy the value of a degree from an Ohio Public Institution, there are clear repercussions of the complete erasure of academic freedom.

In my last three years at an Ohio public university, I have had the privilege of being taught by passionate educators who value the necessity of an interdisciplinary education. My experience in classes relating to pedagogy have prepared me for the reality of teaching and the importance and relevance of social justice in the classroom. If the state refuses to protect its educators, what is keeping them from relocating to a state that will? Ohio has strong teachers, and we cannot afford to drive them out by attacking workers' rights, creating unfit working conditions and unsafe learning environments.

In support of free thinking, I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House. It is clear that our legislators do not have the interest of the state in mind, and the apathy of our representatives is disturbing. I urge you to disregard partisan obligations and reflect upon what this really represents for our future. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Molly Szucs

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