

Dear Members of the Workforce Development and Higher Education Committee,

I am writing to express my opposition to Senate Bill 83. While I commend the legislators for examining the governance of higher education, I believe that certain provisions of this bill would negatively impact student experience and the ability of Ohio to produce STEM workforce required to embrace the future.

I am writing today to provide my perspective for your consideration:

(1) As a former undergraduate and now graduate student at Miami University, taking courses from biochemistry to French literature, I have never felt pressured by professors to adopt their views or felt that I was being indoctrinated. Rather, I have had the opportunity to learn from a diverse group of educators, including those holding conservative beliefs, who have challenged me to think critically and independently.

(2) STEM fields rely on a strong foundation in scientific principles and empirical evidence. All sciences are built on this foundation which includes the debate and discussion of scientific principles. Sometimes, topics of purely scientific consideration are indeed political. I cannot help but think of Galileo's heliocentric model of the solar system. Even though Galileo was making scientific claims about the solar system, it was taken as a political statement about a "controversial issue" by those holding juridical power. It is naive to think that humans have changed and that similar scientific issues do not exist today. To dismiss conversation of scientific issues or new ideas because of controversy is antithesis to the scientific method and the advancement of STEM fields.

(3) The success of STEM students, especially at a graduate level, relies on the ability of institutions to acquire funding to provide them with quality education and opportunities. At this point, it is possible that Senate Bill 83 could affect the accreditation and even the existence of multiple degree programs. This would result in Ohio students being less likely to pursue higher education, or go outside of the state to do so, as well as a decreased attendance of out-of-state and international students. I therefore believe Senate Bill 83 would negatively impact the funding and income of Ohio universities, and thus the quality of education, program opportunities, and research experiences that Ohio undergraduate and graduate students are able to receive. A less educated and experienced STEM workforce will be less prepared to steer Ohio's future.

In conclusion, I urge the members of the Workforce Development and Higher Education Committee to carefully consider the potential negative impacts of Senate Bill 83 on higher education in Ohio. While the governance of higher education is certainly an important topic worthy of examination, this bill could have unintended consequences that may ultimately harm the future of higher education in our state.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Annastasia Babcock