

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Brooke Shields, I am originally from Montgomery County, Maryland. I am a graduating senior at The Ohio State University, majoring in Political Science with a specialization in inequality and justice, with a minor in human rights. I am a scholar student athlete, and leader on the varsity cheerleading team, the President of Sheros— a student organization that supports Black female student athletes on campus, and I served as the Treasurer and Vice President of NAACP. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House.

Like I said earlier, I am very involved on my campus. That is what attracted me to Ohio State. I knew once I stepped on campus, this is where I wanted to be. I knew I wanted to attend a school with a great network for me to build, and to succeed in the next chapter of my life. I not only looked into the school's traditions and resources, but I looked for a school with rich culture and diversity where I could learn more about different groups of people. I knew that if there wasn't a club or a major that interested me, I could create it myself, and allow others to get involved as well. I will admit, coming to Ohio State was a bit of a culture shock, but in a good way. I was able to learn about different jobs, traditions, cultures, religions, languages, and policies while being a student here. If I left college with the training and knowledge I learned from my family, friends, and home town school system, I would not know as much as I do today, and would not be the person I am today. I would not even have the courage to speak to you today. I believe that I have learned a lot and built relationships from programs like Buckeye Inclusion, NAACP, Social Change, Black Student Association, OSU Votes, and our Diversity and Inclusion office. I have been able to learn more about part of my culture that I was not taught in my public school, as well as several other cultures this world has to offer. Sheros has allowed me to connect with people like me, to build a community and create a safe space for us to learn. NAACP allowed me to learn about our nation's history, the good and the ugly. But the ugly is something some people want to shelter us from. They want us to be hidden from all aspects of our history, but that will divide us even more. To learn from last mistakes is a beautiful thing, and not something higher education should hide from its students.

The bill mentions that the institution's mission statements must include "the institution affirms that its duty is to equip students with the intellectual skills they need to reach their own, informed conclusions on matters of social and political importance." How can an institution ensure that it offers students a place to make their own informed decisions if we are not taught or exposed to both sides of any story. I was once close minded and saw only one side of things, because that was all that I was exposed to. I thought what I knew and was taught was the only right way. However, these programs and organizations I took part in allowed me to open my eyes and see multiple perspectives. We know that there are differences that will naturally occur in public education, but to not allow us to explore these differences, ask questions in the classroom, join organizations to allow us to think differently would not ensure any student to make informed decisions. How can we ensure intellectual diversity if we are not required to take diversity courses or training, have debates, and open the floor for new perspectives to be shared? If it

weren't for the debates I had in my classes, with professors, and in several different organizations—if it weren't for the trainings I would take to learn more about, I would never see how my way is not the only way.

I ask that you please consider my experiences here at Ohio and say no to bill 83. Passing this bill will allow buckeyes and other students across the state to be closed minded, and not take advantage of the higher education they are seeking to get. Thousands of students, including myself, would not have and will not consider attending an institution in Ohio if this bill passes. Programs like Morrill Scholars Program, Sheros, National Pan-Hellenic Council, Buckeye Spectrum, are all organizations that anyone can learn from, and contribute to students' experiences. We consider what is offered to allow us to grow and people and partake and engage in society, and this bill will diminish our learning opportunities and growth as citizens in America.