

Testimony of Millie West, Student at Miami University
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 Amelia (Millie) West and I am a second-year student at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where I study Art and Architecture History and Arts Management. I do not represent Miami University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

When I read that SB83 threatens to prohibit any class courses regarding DEI and prohibits the endorsement or commentary of controversial beliefs and policies, I was angered by the Senate's misunderstanding of Ohio students. SB83 claims to protect the people's right to education, but I do not see a reason why any student, Republican or Democrat, would benefit from this bill. If this legislation is meant to improve the education of students, then how does it solve the most pressing problems Ohio's students face?

Conservative college students already choose not to take DEI-related classes or majors. Regardless of this bill's passing, they will not see any change to their course structure or learning. This bill redirects attention away from the most pressing conservative educational issue of the abysmal lack of education in rural Ohio and directs the problem to DEI. In my Republican home county of Scioto County, Ohio, only 2 out of the 13 schools are in good academic standing, one of those being a privately-owned school. This means that 92% of the county's schools have one or more K-12 classes in academic failure. Despite these alarming statistics, there is little government assistance and no legislation in place to better the education of underserved, rural Ohio. This lack of action tells me that my state is more concerned with legislation that is meant to rile attention than it is to address its most pressing education crisis.

Liberal college students who have an interest in DEI-inclusive majors will be forced to transfer to out-of-state because our college and job opportunities within Ohio will be taken away. Majors such as Gender Studies and Social Justice will be cut entirely from colleges and others like Arts Management, multiple History majors, and Anthropology will be restricted in the number of classes and material content they can teach. Both the eradication and degradation of quality jobs for teachers and education for students make me and all of my peers fearful that the tens of thousands of dollars we spend on university will be wasted pursuing a degree that means nothing in the state of Ohio.

If this bill passes, I will move out of state to receive a quality education and better job prospects. I love my state and have faith that my legislators want to implement a policy that addresses the needs of our diverse variety of students, but Senate Bill 83 is not the solution.

SB83 is a misinformed response to my generation's politics and a malicious attack on our right to education.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this dangerous bill. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.