

## Testimony for SB83

My name is Cierra Smith-Carter. I am a Master of Social Work Student at Ohio University, where I work as a Graduate Assistant Care Coordinator. I am also a black, queer woman who would be and works with people who would be deeply affected by the implications of SB83. The language that states the bill would ban “bias” in the classroom is deeply flawed, as it implies that teaching the real history of America, its good and evil, and the atrocities the country has committed against people who look like me is based in biased opinion rather than fact backed up by the people who lived it the many documents supporting it. I ask if the history of jim crow laws or the civil rights movement would be watered down to not distinctly saying that the country did blatantly oppress, condemn, and kill people of color for simply existing. I ask if that would be considered bias even though it is a proven fact. I ask if we want to sanitize that history to fit into a white supremacist agenda, where we do not want to teach our young people that this country has put the white race and its power above all else. I ask if teaching about the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion scares Ohio lawmakers who hold power solely because of their white, straight, and male demographic status rather than their morality and care for their constituents.

I am also adamantly against banning mandatory diversity training. Working for and being a university student, I have seen time and time again the need for these types of training. People come to universities from many different places and backgrounds with implicit or explicit biases that impact minority populations through the language used, policies put into place, and more. Diversity training allows people from all backgrounds to have a basic understanding of how those things impact people of different backgrounds to them, to make sure that when they are speaking, writing policy, or teaching, they can do so in a way that includes everyone and makes

everyone feel safe and comfortable. Again, I ask why training our professionals to treat students fairly is a danger to anyone. I ask if the law writers' discomfort in being told that people who look like them have power is more important than the hundreds of thousands of students of color and their educational experience. Having been in many mandatory diversity training sessions, never have I felt that it was a negative for me or those around me. And those who express those thoughts have clearly never been on the receiving end of blatant or systematic discrimination and oppression.

Without what this bill describes as bias, examples being programs focusing on the safety and comfort of students of color, classes on black history, mandatory diversity training, and educators who have used their platform to uplift the students who have systematically been put down, I would not be where I am today.

SB83 is racist, sexist, and built on white supremacist ideology. Passing this bill would put educators, faculty, and students of color at risk of further discrimination than they already receive. It only protects the interest of extremist conservative lawmakers who would push against the rights of education rather than challenge their immoral ideology.