

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 83
Senate Committee on Workforce and Higher Education
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Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Lydia Gokey. I am an undergraduate student at OSU in the Department of AAEP. I also work as a student intern at the university's art galleries, one being right down the street from the State House and Supreme Court. I am here to express my concerns on SB 83 and how dangerous I, and others within higher education, see this bill becoming if enforced.

Much of my research deals with inequality within underprivileged groups. In one of my advanced Arts Education classes, we discussed the Tuskegee Experiments. Under SB 83, my professor would have had to detail the falseness that was presented for years by our own government to cover up the murder and unjust medical experimentation on 600 innocent Black men. This is just one case in how my higher education would be severely impacted.

As a gender non-conforming student who is open about their identity, this could also impact how my identity can be displayed and discussed in classes. As someone who uses they/them and she/her pronouns (which I know many of you don't care for), it is important to me that my identity is respected and I am allowed to be comfortable in a classroom setting; it is a basic human right to this, and none of you can infringe on this. I do not want my identity to be allowed to be contested. Imagine if this went into place for white people. You don't want your precious history to be argued on, do you? It hurts, right? Imagine how everyone else feels, everyone who has had to fight to receive semi-equal treatment by the law and sub-par treatment by those who don't believe in equality. Shame on you for limiting students' rights to advocacy for themselves and their peers. Shame on you for telling us what we can and cannot do with our rights to education. I don't know many of my peers who think that topics such as this are considered "controversial," which means they are few and far between, meaning that you are appealing to the minority. Is this what could be considered a true democracy?

Please think about my statement as you decide what is best for us, and the future of higher education in Ohio. As the oldest sister, I do not want my three younger siblings to not hear what is right or wrong for their friends and themselves. We deserve to grow up learning how to advocate for those around us, not what could be considered right or wrong. Racism cannot be considered, in any way, shape, or form, a "right." Disallowing DEI would bring this.

I ask that you consider this and my other fellow opponents when voting on this, and vote NO for SB 83.

Thank you kindly for your time, senators.