

**[Opponent] Testimony for Senate Bill 83**  
**Senate Committee on Workforce and Higher Education**  
**April 19, 2023**

**Justin Ortuno-Martinez**  
**Student of the Ohio State University**

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 Justin Ortuno-Martinez. I am a full-time student of the Ohio State University's Columbus campus as well as an aspiring academic. I am here to express concern over the reasoning and logistics of SB83, specifically Section 3345.0217, divisions (B)(2) and (B)(5), however I take issue with the entire bill. This bill states in these divisions that any "mandatory programs regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion" are to be banned and that "intellectual diversity" rubrics are to be put in place to limit the courses, presumably to remove the controversial matters mentioned in division (A)(1). This bill reiterates the idea that it is in the name of "free speech", but by limiting diversity and equity in the name of free speech, it is working antithetical to free speech as a concept. When the bill mentions free speech, I have to ask: "Free speech for whom?" Through removing mentions of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, the students that pay for their education and are in social groups that diversity programs work to elevate are having their speech limited. These topics and programs are influential in keeping a multitude of perspectives alive. The students who pay to receive that education are having their education limited and restricted. In division (B)(4), it states that students should seek their own conclusions, but how do we expect them to make their own conclusions if their entire educational experience is put through a filter?

As a student of the Ohio State University, I have seen these classes transform people in ways I never imagined could happen in a classroom setting. I am a member of the Ohio Prison Education Exchange Project (OPEEP), a project working within carceral facilities to extend higher education to the incarcerated people there. I have seen both incarcerated students and outside students learn from the course material and have dialogues, debates, and agreements about what it means to be "normal" or what it means to have freedom and imagining a life outside of, or even without, all types of prison. We would never have had this experience or even this program if this bill were in place. We came to our own conclusions of the texts and theories we came across.

The entire university would be shaken over this. LGBTQ students would have mentions of their community and history be ignored and excluded for the sake of “free speech” of those who oppose their very existence. African-American, Asian, Indigenous, Latino students would have their histories removed from classrooms for fear of upsetting the rubrics and syllabi instilled on their classes by this bill. The human experience would be closed off if we were to allow this bill to limit our classroom speech for the sake of those too uncomfortable to listen to it or even desire to understand it. Educators would have to overly limit themselves for fear of even approaching controversy in their topics. Columbus, for example, is a highly diverse city full of people of so many different identities and backgrounds, but to limit the education of the students within it in order to preserve the status quo of comfortability for those who already are in the spotlight goes against what higher education should stand for: a principled and complex understanding of the world and the workforce.

To close my testimony, I assert that this bill impacts all people of many different social groups that are in different positions of power, working to eradicate a multitude of perspectives. This is an issue not just for Ohio State University students, but for all students and faculty in every university in this state of Ohio. This bill claims to be for free speech and yet it goes against all American tenets of free speech. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote no to this bill for the sake of the people.

Thank you.