

Dear Senator Cirino and member of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee,

My name is Miriam Matteson. I work in higher education administration at Kent State University, but I am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

As a professional in higher education in Ohio for more than 15 years, I take very seriously my job to provide the highest quality education to every student who enters my university. A high-quality education includes exposure to and interaction with a broad range of ideas, especially topics that SB 83 might label "controversial". But instead, the language in SB 83 seems to prevent that. Should it pass, this legislation will have a chilling effect on students' social and cognitive development.

To back up this claim, I would point you to body of research that shows that engaging with diverse and controversial topics improves cognition and critical thinking. For example, Pascarella et al. (2014)¹ found that students who had participated in diversity-oriented experiences and discussions showed increased cognitive thought as measured by an objective critical thinking instrument from the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency. This effect was found to have been sustained over a four-year period, even after controlling for pre-college critical thinking and ACT scores.

Given the value of interacting with diverse and "controversial" concepts, it would be harmful to students to suppress access to such diverse experiences. By withholding the opportunity to engage around diverse issues, graduates of Ohio universities will be *less* prepared for the diversity of our world. They will be *less* attractive as candidates for jobs in every industry. We will have done them a tremendous disservice with this legislation.

College is the time in adult life where we should encourage deep, critical thinking around the most complex topics of our time - not stifle or ban those topics from our campuses. It is in those moments when students face new and different information that they learn and grow. We should not subject Ohio universities to state-imposed mandates or bans on course content, affinity groups, or other campus initiatives that help students understand the world.

Ohio has a proud tradition of investing in higher education. Our public and private colleges and universities attract faculty and students from around the country and the globe. We produce cutting edge, innovative research to solve challenging problems. We graduate leaders in every field of study. Whether this tradition of excellence is permitted to continue or not will be directly connected to this bill.

I urge you to reconsider the many harmful elements of SB83 that will diminish the high-quality educational experience Ohio's universities provide.

Sincerely,

Miriam Matteson

¹ Pascarella, E.T., Martin, G.L., Hanson, J.M., Trolan, T.L., Gillig, B., & Blaich, C. (2014). Effects of diversity experiences on critical thinking skills over 4 years of college. *Journal of College Student Development* 55(1), 86-92. [doi:10.1353/csd.2014.0009](https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2014.0009).