

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

**Lucas Blair**

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 Lucas Blair. I am a student at The Ohio State University who has benefited from the required DEI general education classes. I live on campus at the university. I am here to express my discontent with the bill's purpose, particularly the insistence on removing required DEI classes and the ban on striking for university employees.

I am an architecture major at the university. My plan for my career involves working in preservation, particularly in underprivileged communities who could benefit the most from it. The exact reason I discovered I was very passionate about preservation and helping these communities was because of a required general education course that would be banned under the bill (THEATRE 2700). As a college student, I know most of us are not fond of taking general education courses, so removing this requirement would result in smaller enrollment in these classes. I'm concerned how this will impact my fellow college students, particularly the incoming students in the class of 2027. Perhaps a student in that group may never find their passion within their field because they were not exposed to the important subject matter taught in DEI classes. Additionally, it would reduce awareness of social issues that affect minorities and oppressed groups. I would consider myself a relatively educated person on social events, but by taking THEATRE 2700, I learned so much about the problems that aren't always covered in the news. We as young voters cannot properly educate ourselves unless we learn about these issues through the classes that are at risk.

This bill would impact two major communities I belong to: LGBTQ+ students and the university as a whole. I am most worried about how marginalized groups, particularly those of racial, ethnic, and gender minorities, will be affected. I believe that removing the requirement for DEI general education courses will reduce the general awareness of the issues that these communities face. In my mind, this seems like an act of malicious suppression of these issues. As I mentioned earlier, we as college students reach eligibility for voting age, and this bill's attempt to obscure the problems that minority groups face seems to be pushing us to vote for a specific party. Additionally, these marginalized groups will only feel further alienated as their push for recognition is swept under the rug. Next, I think the attempt to ban university officials, including student workers, from striking is a violation of the very principles this bill claims to promote. For

a bill that tries to advocate for free speech, suppressing the right to collectively bargain is the very antithesis of that idea. Should the university attempt to impose new legislation that would negatively affect its workers, they would be powerless to oppose it. The only action that employees could take is quitting their jobs. This will likely result in poor working conditions unless a mass of workers quitting occurs.

I am testifying because I cannot sit idly and watch my fellow university students and faculty have their rights removed from them. I cannot allow the government to strip the requirement for a type of course that was so meaningful to me. I am reminded of Niemöller's prose: "First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—Because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me." I may not be as affected by this bill as others at this university, but I must speak out now to prevent further violations of our rights as students. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote no on Senate Bill 83. Thank you.