

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 83

Senate Committee on Workforce and Higher Education

April 19, 2023

Sophia Shai

ACLU Campus Action Team

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 Sophia Shai.

I am a second year student at OSU studying Neuroscience on the pre-med track. I also help run my campus's ACLU action team, with help from the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio. I've lived in Ohio my whole life, Westerville to be specific. I've learned here, and grown up here. I'm here to advocate against Senate Bill 83. I believe the passing of this bill will have extremely negative effects on university life and education for all people. Since highschool, I have been trying to serve my community, and especially my peers. I have spoken to school board members about updating curriculum and creating safer spaces for people in my community; the constituents that you are supposed to be doing this for. This bill says it wants to target things such as 'controversial material' or stop indoctrination. But all you are doing is trying to indoctrinate us. Making it required to take an American History class even after the mandatory completion of a highschool class IS indoctrination. Especially if you are outlawing how people can talk about this history in relation to systemic oppression. Colonial roots will always haunt our systems. It is your job, as our elected officials, to ensure that these systems stop degrading the lived experiences of your constituents, your fellow citizens. To not be able to talk about 'controversial matters' is to not be able to speak from experience. How are you going to tell a college aged adult that they are not allowed to, for example, explain how they have personally experienced hate and oppression as a DIRECT result of the American history this bill is trying to indoctrinate us with. I value education so much, to take away education and deny the intellectual abilities and lived experiences of students is nothing short of unconstitutional. To want to ban initiatives of inclusivity just shows outwardly what this senate values. Valuing homogeneity is simply an evil thing to do. You cannot erase someone's identity by pretending you are creating a 'safe' place. This is not safety; to ban people from wanting to take initiatives to better themselves and understand their place in the world in their student-led workplace is simply wrong. To act like racial oppression doesn't exist doesn't erase it or make it go away, it only creates more. In the end, this bill is simply unconstitutional; denying the right to strike and protest; denying the right to have a stance on anything 'controversial' even though it is simply someone's lived experience. This bill intends to create intellectual inquiry to seek the 'truth'. As someone who has attended educational systems in Ohio my whole life, I can see that this bill only intends to do one thing, and that is to help fuel the false truth that oppression doesn't exist; that we don't need initiatives for equity and inclusion. This bill will do nothing but create division among peers. I ask that you please consider my testimony and vote no to this bill. Thank you.