

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you.

My name is Leila Khan and I'd like to give you a bit of background on me: I'm a third-year undergraduate student at Ohio State, and I'm Pakistani-American and Muslim, with both my parents having immigrated from Pakistan to Ohio about 30 years ago. I'm proud to say I've spent all twenty years of my life in Ohio and care very deeply about this state. I tell you this because all those pieces of who I am are exactly why I'm both frightened and angry over the potential passing of SB83. It is also why I urge you to vote no on it.

The passing of this bill would be detrimental in many ways. More than anything, it endangers the trust students have in their government and in their educators. By forcing educators to relinquish freedom in what they teach students, including the current state of politics in America and the darker history of America, politicians are sending a message to young people: Don't trust what we say and don't trust what your teachers say. The breakdown of trust in educational and governmental institutions is what will lead to the breakdown of a healthy society.

One of the most confounding parts of the bill is its regulation on diversity in classrooms and on campuses. On page eight of this bill, it prohibits specified concepts – allyship, diversity, social justice, sustainability, systematic racism, gender identity, equity, and inclusion. Yet right above this prohibition is a requirement for state institutions: that intellectual diversity must be promoted, that multiple, divergent, and opposing perspectives on public policy must be promoted, especially those that are poorly represented on campus. In other words, instructors must teach about fringe theories surrounding public policy.

Some in our state legislature wants to pick and choose what is good diversity and what is bad diversity. To them, good diversity is when a student cannot be challenged when saying uninformed or bigoted beliefs amongst their peers and instructors. By promoting facts and dismissing misinformation, professors are somehow indoctrinating students with so-called left-wing beliefs. All students see is that Ohio politicians want diversity that benefits their voters and no one else.

Bad diversity is what they incorrectly believe divides our country. They believe that speaking on our differences disconnects us from one another. That if I talk about my experiences as a woman-of-color, it could segregate me from my white and male classmates. But to think that is to be completely out of touch with not just my generation, but also countless studies on the effects of racial, sexual, and socioeconomic diversity.

A 2013 Princeton University Paper by Psychology PhD Deborah Son Holoien entitled "Do Differences Make a Difference?" studied how curriculum diversity affects cognitive outcomes and prejudicial attitudes. It found that while students' exposure to diversity can at first make them uncomfortable or anxious, with practice and increased exposure, students reap many benefits from being surrounded by diversity. They become more comfortable with their views being challenged, more comfortable around those with different lived experiences than themselves. It better prepares them for the real world, where they are bound to work with people

different from themselves. It found that students were more willing to learn about how their perceptions can be biased and that they desired to change those perceptions. And it found that by learning to accept differences between groups of people, we more easily accept them into institutions and atmospheres they once felt alienated from. Instead of driving us apart, talking in-depth about how diverse we are as a nation unites us. It makes us kinder, smarter, and more willing to meet each other halfway. Which students wouldn't benefit from those qualities? So, when politicians tell me they're doing this for my benefit, I cannot help but be offended by how little they think of me.

Lastly, and on a more personal note, having diversity in classrooms makes me feel safer. Knowing that no matter where my classmates are from or what they've previously been taught, they will learn about cultural and societal differences amongst citizens of the world. Some of us students may roll our eyes at having to take a sociology course when we enroll but there is a reason for that. It is to understand that our preconceived notions will be challenged as soon as we arrive. Knowing that classmates will learn that peoples religion or gender or socioeconomic status will always vary but should never divide us makes me comfortable and engaged in campus life.

I remember speaking to my brother once about the effects of 9/11 on Muslim Americans. I wasn't born when 9/11 happened but my brother was -- he's ten years older than me. I remember him telling me how scared our community was. I remember him telling me how kids would call him a terrorist to be funny. And I remember him telling me how having the last name Khan was like having a target on your back. But the most shocking part of all this was that I couldn't relate to it at all. He told me this three years ago and I was in utter shock, thoroughly appalled. That isn't to say discrimination doesn't occur now or that I've never experienced it. But the culture I grew up in along with my peers disallowed for the language and attitudes my brother endured. And that's thanks to education.

I've grown up in the most diverse and inclusive generation in American history. My friends, my peers, and I enjoy talking about our experiences. We benefit from our beliefs being challenged. We don't pretend that education leads to division. And we don't let moments where we disagree permanently fracture us. We learn from each other and through that we grow as individuals. And by saying no to SB83, you will be fighting for future generations, allowing them to share the positive experiences that me and my peers have been lucky to have. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.