

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Shelby Larson. I am a student from the Ohio State University who is currently majoring in English to become a high school English teacher. Today, I am here to explain why I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 83 and its companion bill in the Ohio House.

Growing up, beginning with elementary school all the way until my college years, I have been taught that speaking out about subjects such as LGBTQ+ issues in a school setting is taboo; it is something that should be shunned and pushed aside into the shadows to never see the light of day again. My entire life, I have always wondered why this is. It astonished me that history books are filled to the brim with stories of white English men who have colonized countries of those who are different than them, white English men who have forced Indigenous People and people of color to succumb to their Christianity, white English men who have murdered millions and silenced those who they view as lesser than them to claim ownership of lands that they have ransacked. Yet... whilst these history books are filled with the praising of these white English men who have not only destroyed cultures of people of color, but have ruined the environment in the process, these history books have no mention of the events of Stonewall, or Marsha P. Johnson, or the thousands of other LGBTQ+ activists who have fought for their freedom.

When I first began college, though, I was amazed at the fact that there were classes discussing LGBTQ+ authors, courses that focuses on women, sexuality, and power, and, generally speaking, I was surprised that there were classes readily available to me where I would be able to sit down and learn about my own cultural history in a respectful, safe, environment that is void of the risk of bullying and harassment from my fellow peers. Similarly, it was genuinely surprising to me that there were organizations on my college campus that fought for the voices of their LGBTQ+ students and groups who got together to discuss pressing issues pertaining to the LGBTQ+ community. As someone who identifies as a bisexual woman, these courses and organizations being presented and broadcasted to me made me feel welcome and made me feel like I could belong in a world where I thought I should be embarrassed of who I am.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this exceptionally damaging bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

I will now take any questions you may have.