

Jerry Cirino

State Senator

18th Senate District



Rob McColley

State Senator

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Sponsor Testimony

Senate Bill 117

Workforce and Higher Education Committee

May 9, 2023

Vice-Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee: Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 117. This bill will allow the Ohio State University to establish the Salmon P. Chase Center for Civics, Culture, and Society at the Ohio State University, and the University of Toledo to establish the Institute of American Constitutional Thought and Leadership within their College of Law.

The University of Toledo's Institute of American Constitutional Thought and Leadership will give tomorrow's lawyers the opportunity to learn the foundations that the United States of America was built upon. By teaching using the thoughts and writings of not only America's founders, including Adams, Hamilton, and Jefferson, but also the scholars who shaped the American system, such as Plato, Aquinas, and Locke, our future lawyers will have access to a variety of viewpoints. These diverse teachings will encourage individuals in the legal field to encounter fundamental questions concerning justice and the rule of law with an emphasis on intellectual freedom, rigorous debate, and mutual respect.

The Ohio State University's Salmon P. Chase Center for Civics, Culture, and Society would introduce a new level of debate that would allow students to receive broadened viewpoints. Although enrollment has nearly tripled since the 1970s, a 2018 survey done by the Citizens and Scholars showed that only 23% of Ohio adults were able to receive a passing grade on a multiple choice test consisting of items from the U.S. Citizenship test. Of the 23%, only 4% received an A in comparison to the 59% that had received an F. The establishment of this new

center allows students and their families to pursue an education full of rigorous civic debate.

To accomplish these goals, we are asking for \$6 million in 2024 and \$7 million in 2025 under the General Revenue Fund line item "Program and Project Support". In fiscal year 2024, the University of Toledo will receive \$1 million with an increase to \$2 million in fiscal year 2025. The Ohio State University will receive the remainder of the funds each fiscal year.

Using public funds for the creation of both of these centers is not an anomaly; both Arizona State University and the University of Florida have created similar centers to aide in establishing diverse viewpoints at their respective universities. As scholars have stated, it is no secret that university faculty are predominantly liberal. This causes a single ideological perspective to dominate academia. With the passage of this legislation, we are giving students and their parents' options within the market to choose an education that is best suited for them.

Vice-Chair Rulli, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. Senator Cirino and I are happy to answer any questions the committee may have.