

Testimony of Terry Filicko (Chair, Ohio Faculty Senate of Community and Technical Colleges)  
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair  
May 16, 2023

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

My name is Terry Filicko. I am an associate professor at Clark State College, where I have taught for just over ten years. I teach political science courses as well as the College Success course. In addition, it is my honor to serve as Chair of the Ohio Faculty Senate of Community and Technical Colleges. I am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Substitute Senate Bill 83; I do not represent Clark State College.

Community colleges in Ohio provide programming in technical education, lower-division baccalaureate education, applied baccalaureate education, developmental education, and continuing education. My testimony is to draw attention to four concerns as to how the proposed legislation has the potential to constrain community college faculty in pursuit of this mission and to undermine the educational and career prospects for our students. Specifically, the proposed bill in its current form would still undermine:

1. faculty responsibility for curricular decisions;
2. faculty responsibility for ensuring the integrity and quality of faculty appointment and promotion procedures;
3. institutional and program responsibility to external accrediting bodies; and
4. our ability to prepare students to join the workforce, specifically to pursue careers in the growing industries in the region.

I would direct your attention to a resolution of the Faculty Congress of Ohio in opposition to this legislation. The Faculty Congress is the body which combines the Ohio Faculty Senate, which represents community and technical college faculty, and the Ohio Faculty Council, which represents our public university colleagues. Dr. Laura Luehrmann, Chair of the OFC, has submitted the joint resolution as opponent testimony. In that resolution, you will see that faculty are united in our opposition to this bill. Specifically, the Faculty Congress of Ohio,

- **Resolves**, that the current legislative items under consideration by our elected officials, including S.B. 83 and H.B. 151, designed to regulate academic programs and faculty, are examples of unnecessary overreach that will create additional layers of bureaucracy, costing taxpayers more money and damaging the success and competitiveness of our students and graduates; [and]
- **Resolves**, that legislative initiatives to unduly monitor and limit discussion, debate and diversity in our esteemed institutions of higher education damage the intellectual contributions of our faculty, infringing upon students, graduates and academic institutions.

I draw your attention to the role that accreditation plays for our institutions and programs. All of our institutions go through regular reaccreditation review from external bodies, such as the Higher Learning Commission (HLC). Without that accreditation for our institutions, students may not be eligible for federal financial aid and their credits might not transfer. The accreditation standards require

commitment to academic freedom, faculty evaluation processes, course and program evaluation and assessment, and so on. We have these policies and procedures in place to ensure the integrity of our institutions. If the legislature steps in to mandate policies, our status as fully accredited institutions is at risk.

I acknowledge – and appreciate – that changes have been made to allow for required professional development on diversity issues for faculty in specific programs, such as Nursing and Physical Therapy Assistant, but the overall message undermines the importance of having all faculty prepared to support all students as they pursue their academic and career goals.

We want our students to be prepared to enter the workforce. Awareness of and preparation to participate in a diverse workforce is essential. Having faculty who are trained in diversity, equity, and inclusion helps us prepare our students. For example, both Intel and Honda prominently feature their commitments to diversity on their websites:

- Intel notes that “[d]iversity and inclusion are instrumental in driving innovation and delivering strong business growth.”<sup>i</sup>
- Honda explains that “[s]ameness doesn’t work in a product line and it doesn’t work in a workforce. That’s why from the beginning, Honda has strived to bring people from different cultures, backgrounds, races, genders and sexual orientations together.”<sup>ii</sup>

To summarize, the bill in its current form

- Will add considerable administrative costs at both the institutional level and at the Ohio Department of Higher Education, which is not sustainable at a time of declining state revenues and declining enrollments;
- Will undermine institutional accreditation particularly on issues of faculty control of curriculum, faculty responsibility for appointment and promotion, and institutional responsibility for shared governance; and
- Will diminish the quality of education for our students by removing curricular decisions from content experts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I conclude with the last part of the Faculty Congress of Ohio resolution:

- ***Be it further resolved*** that the Faculty Congress of Ohio strongly opposes legislative actions designed to micromanage our campuses and classrooms, and further commits to working with the relevant committees in the Ohio House and Ohio Senate to continue to ensure the best educational opportunities for all of our students.

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.intel.com/content/www/us/en/diversity/diversity-at-intel.html>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://csr.honda.com/diversity/>