

OPPONENT TESTIMONY OF:

Khalid Dada
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IN OPPOSITION OF:

Senate Bill 83

[Columbus, OH, 5/17/23] — Dear Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and the Senate Workforce and Higher Education committee members. My name is Khalid Dada, and I am here today to express my opposition to Senate Bill 83. As a recent graduate of the Ohio State University and former President of the Muslim Students Association (MSA), I have seen firsthand the importance of student organizations like the MSA in creating a sense of community and support for minority and underrepresented students.

Senate Bill 83 proposes to require that all student organizations receive approval from the university's Board of Trustees before being recognized as official organizations. This process is burdensome and could target and suppress organizations seen as controversial or unfavorable selectively. If passed, this bill would have a devastating impact on the ability of student organizations to function and serve their communities.

The MSA is one of Ohio State's largest and most active student organizations. It provides a safe space for Muslim students to connect, engage in community service and activism, and to celebrate their faith and cultural traditions. Without the MSA, I would not have been able to serve as a leader and make positive strides for the future of Muslim students at Ohio State and around the nation. The MSA serves as a platform for Muslim students to exercise their rights to freedom of association, speech, and religion, which are fundamental rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

Furthermore, this bill can potentially impact all student organizations, including those representing other religious or cultural groups. By adding layers of bureaucracy and restrictions, this bill would make it harder for students to create and sustain organizations that serve their interests and needs.

These organizations provide opportunities for students to engage in meaningful activities outside of the classroom, develop leadership skills, and connect with like-minded peers. Senate Bill 83 threatens to undermine that vital work by making it harder for student organizations to operate and potentially censoring their activities. It would also have a chilling effect on free speech and association—vital components of a thriving and diverse college campus.

To conclude, I urge you to reject Senate Bill 83. It is a threat to the fundamental rights of students and the vibrant campus culture that makes Ohio State and other academic institutions in Ohio so unique. As a young leader, I speak from experience since I have made it my responsibility to ensure every student is heard and their rights are upheld. I'm here today to urge the committee to oppose this bill on behalf of all Ohio-based, religiously committed students, not just Muslims. Thank you for your consideration.