

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in writing Senators. My name is Sean Wilhite, and I am a recent graduate of the University of Toledo College of Law. My testimony in favor of SB 117 describes the positive impact the Institute will have on students at my alma mater.

SB 117 will have a positive impact on the quality of education available to law students in Ohio. The Institute will contribute to a diverse array of classes that advance students' lawyering skills and knowledge. For example, during my entire time in law school, a class on State Constitutional Law Litigation was not offered. Additionally, the Institute will complement the faculty expertise that is already present on campus. The Institute will also greatly benefit the students by bringing visiting professors to campus who are experts in areas of law that students would not otherwise be exposed to.

Another goal of the Institute is to offer students an exploration into diverse modes of legal thinking through the sponsoring of debate, lectures, and symposia, and this too will positively affect the students at the University. I noticed that there was a developing orthodoxy among the student body and some of the faculty. Many classes are approached from a one sided bent; dissent from orthodoxy is met by derision or dismissed as not worthy of discussion. There are very few organizations on campus that program substantive debates and discussions that deviate from the prevailing orthodoxy. The Institute would provide the students with valuable exposure to variety of legal viewpoints on important subjects that are not being covered by the University or the existing student organizations.

One of the best pieces of advice I heard throughout my legal education was that a good lawyer can argue their opposition's case as well if not better than their own. This makes sense, because if you want to persuade a jury or judge that your position is correct, you need to find the weaknesses in your opponent's case, but you also need to understand their strongest points to counter them. The Institute will provide students with training to act professionally while vigorously advocating for their position. The Institute will also model how to effectively meet opposing arguments on the merits, and civilly engage with those arguments. Providing law students with this training is a major service to Ohio's residents who will one day look to them to be their advocates in court. SB 117 will be a great step in providing this training.

It is my hope that this written testimony is useful to you, thank you again for allowing me to submit this testimony. I would ask that you please pass SB 117. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Sean Wilhite, J.D.
University of Toledo Law 2023