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Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and honorable members of the committee,

My name is Colin Flanagan, and I am a current student at the University of Toledo College of Law. In short, UT Law is in an increasingly perilous position. The University as a whole is in desperate need of assistance from the General Assembly to reshape itself, but the remedy that SB117 provides is not a favorable one.

In 2020, UT Law was ranked 136th in United States, after falling significantly over time. Last year, this ranking dropped below 147th, making it unranked. Bar passing rates are down, professors and deans are seeking other opportunities, and students seeking a legal education are being robbed of a decent legal education like the one Sen. McColley received at UT Law just over a decade ago.

The University of Toledo is in turmoil as a whole. Prices are increasing, but outcomes are unchanged. When I applied for a joint degree program to also receive a Master of Public Administration, I was interested in becoming a teaching assistant or research assistant. I had worked in both of these positions for The Ohio State University and University of Chicago and greatly enjoyed them. However, the MPA program director told me that they were unable to hire another round of TAs and RAs because they were running out of funding. The MPA used to offer full scholarships for TAs and RAs, then was forced to reduce it to half-funded scholarships, and

now, they may never be able to offer funding again because of lack of support from the General Assembly.

I share with you my personal experience. I was a paid researcher and teaching assistant at two prestigious universities, and I chose to return to the University of Toledo because I have a passion for the city I grew up in. The school is in serious decline, and this bill would hurt it more.

This bill would create an entirely new institute to be hosted within the College of Law. Already limited classroom space would be more limited. UT Law would have to hire more library staff. While \$3,000,000 is quite a lot of money for an institution like UT Law, this bill would not give the \$3,000,000 to UT Law: it would give it to the new institute. There are countless problems this could create, but it seeks to solve a problem that does not exist.

UT Law already has a proud tradition of debate, and certainly has a variety of constitutional interpretation among its four faculty members who commonly teach constitutional law. In the time I have been a student at UT Law, we have hosted conservative speakers from the Alliance Defending Freedom, the Heritage Foundation, and the Cato Institute. The primary concern of many purveyors of this bill is that there is a liberal bias in our institutions of higher learning. At UT Law, it is almost undisputable that there is a strong conservative bias.

I see my colleagues from across the country thriving at law schools like the University of Iowa, University of Chicago, Harvard, Georgetown, and so on. These are all places I could have chosen to pursue an education, but I chose to come back to the city I love to try and make it a better place. Folks like me are being robbed of a quality legal education—not because of the lack of institute for constitutional thought—but because of a simple lack of institutional financial support from the General Assembly.

I ask that you amend this piece of legislation to be a simple \$3,000,000 annual appropriation to the University of Toledo College of Law, perhaps earmarking it for staff salaries.