

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

My name is Megan Anderson, and I appear before you today as a 3rd-year law student at the University of Toledo College of Law, speaking in strong opposition to Senate Bill 117. I am the outgoing president of the Public Interest Law Association and an associate editor on the Toledo Law Review. I am here not only as a representative of my law school but also as a future officer in the United States Navy, having been accepted into the prestigious student program to practice with the Navy Judge Advocate General's Corps (JAG) upon my graduation.

Today, I want to bring your attention to the urgent needs of the University of Toledo College of Law and express my concerns regarding the potential implications of Senate Bill 117.

In recent years, our law school has been facing numerous challenges. Funding has declined, leading to a meaningful impact on the quality of education provided to students. The lack of adequate financial resources has resulted in a scarcity of courses and professors, limiting the options available for students to pursue their legal education. As a result, our university has seen its ranking in US News and World Report continue to decline in recent years. When I applied to law schools in 2020 Toledo was ranked 136th in the US, last year our ranking dropped below 147 and into the bottom tier of unranked schools.

These metrics of decline are alarming, and the impacts are felt by the students themselves. Bar passage rates have dropped significantly in recent years which are due to a lack of comprehensive resources and support systems to prepare students for the bar exam, not an alleged lack of “intellectual diversity”. Unfortunately, SB 117 does not propose addressing the pressing real needs of the University of Toledo College of Law and it’s students.

As an aspiring attorney, I am acutely aware of the challenges faced by my fellow law students and the pressing need for a comprehensive and robust legal education. As a member of the student body, I am eager to see the University of Toledo College of Law thrive. I understand the immense potential for growth and

improvement that additional funding could bring. I am willing to support measures that genuinely benefit our law school, its students, faculty, and staff. However, although SB 117's proposed Institute of American Constitutional Thought and Leadership may seem commendable, it does not adequately address the critical issues faced by the University of Toledo's College of Law.

The narrowly pointed focus of SB 117 fails to address the areas of law where we face significant shortages in specialized professors, such as family law, criminal law, administrative law, and estate law. These areas are crucial for the holistic development of future legal professionals, enabling us to serve our communities effectively. Equally, our law school currently employs four professors that are constitutional law experts that provide differing legal philosophies and approaches to the constitution. These professors are already providing students with a diverse intellectual atmosphere for the study of constitutional law without the proposed institution.

To attract new students and their tax dollars to Ohio, we must prioritize offering a comprehensive legal education that prepares students for the real-world challenges they will encounter as attorneys. Establishing a specialized institute (and compelling our law school to house it) will divert resources and attention away from many critical areas of legal practice. It also fails to address the current lack of course offerings for law students to pursue a wide range of important areas of law that are of great importance and need, such as family law.

In conclusion, I implore the Ohio Senate to recognize the urgent needs of the University of Toledo's College of Law and to see that this bill does not address them. As a law student preparing to serve my country in the Navy JAG Corps, I understand the importance of a well-rounded legal education that equips us to handle diverse legal challenges. To achieve this the answer is not this new institute but instead more robust funding of our law school.

Thank you for your attention and consideration. I trust that you will carefully deliberate on the critical issues at hand and make decisions that prioritize the future success of the University of Toledo College of Law, its students, faculty, and staff.