

Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Opponent Testimony on SB 117
Jourdyn McQueary

May 30, 2023

Chairman Cirino, Vice-Chair Michael Rulli, Ranking Member Kent Smith, and members of the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to SB 117 and the creation of the Institute for American Constitutional Thought & Leadership at the University of Toledo College of Law. My name is Jourdyn McQueary, and I am a recent graduate of the University of Toledo College of Law. I am writing to express the negative impact this legislation will have on the University of Toledo College of Law.

While attending the law school, I had many opportunities to learn from people who were different than me, get to know people who disagreed with me, and witness many robust legal debates—both inside and outside of the classroom. Despite these opportunities, a dark cloud hung over the students and faculty for much of my time there. Financial stress, loss of faculty, and a drop in our national rankings were some of the most pressing issues on our minds. Now, this legislation purports to offer the college an answer to its struggles; however, there are discrepancies in its text and much left to be desired regarding transparency.

The Institute is not associated with the College of Law except for in the interim while it garners more funding of its own. Pursuant to the text of the bill, the Institute is intended to be an “independent academic unit.” The Board appointed to oversee the Institute will have only one (1) employee of the University of Toledo serving at a time leaving the other six (6) board seats to outside scholars and third parties. The courses to be offered by the Institute are unclear, but they will be open for non-law students and center on constitutional thought. Further, the Institute’s Director will circumvent all traditional methods of curricula design and academic bureaucracy at the University of Toledo.

This proposed legislation also relies on the false notion that the University of Toledo College of Law does not foster an environment open to diverse legal perspectives or academic freedom. As it relates to Constitutional Law, the University has four (4) leading scholars among its faculty and administration and consistently engages outside speakers and debates on a variety of constitutional law topics. What the University of Toledo College of Law is missing is a *comprehensive* legal education and curricula that focuses on its students’ success on the Bar Exam and as future practicing attorneys. The law school deserves funding in those areas, and this legislation will take away from that. The University of Toledo College of Law does not deserve to be drained of more resources—especially while it continues to struggle maintaining a diverse student body.

Thank you for considering my testimony. Please oppose SB 117.

Regards,

Jourdyn McQueary, J.D.
University of Toledo College of Law 2023