

Testimony of Seelie DeCresce-Carter,

B.A. Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Miami University

Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Rep. Tom Young, Chair

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Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Seelie, and I am a lifelong Ohio citizen. My love of our state led me to publish and present my own research as an undergraduate at Miami University regarding the sexual health resources at regional campuses throughout our state. I do not represent Miami University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen... a private citizen who understands that many of those giving testimony before me are experts in these topics, yet I still feel more qualified in my understanding of the sexual health concerns across Ohio than both committees that I have spoken to now. I spoke before the Senate Committee, watched the violations against your people and especially those with disabilities through the abuse of bureaucratic process and ineptitude, and I've lost faith in the local government I've seen as so important my entire life here.

Ignoring the constant redirection regarding overflow rooms and time line for testimony, including the conveniently timed luncheons and presentations that interrupted the walking path in such a vast and confusing building, I'll admit that I was a bit flustered giving prior testimony at 10:30 pm. This may have been due to the time, but I think it's likely due to the fact that each person giving testimony was given 3 minutes, no matter who they are- except for the testimony of Greg Lawson, a lobbyist from the Buckeye Institute. Y'all conveniently forgot to start his timer until he'd been droning for at least 3 minutes, and by the time he sat down to a half asleep crowd twenty full minutes had passed. This is unacceptable, considering that true experts in this topic were not afforded the same luxury of boring us to sleep. I abandoned my previously written testimony to try to address his points and failed. Thank you for the opportunity to organize my thoughts.

Though it was hard to keep focused on a voice that sounds like Ben Stein reading ingredient labels, the

thing that stuck out to me most in his testimony was the concern about indoctrination. A basic google search defines this as "the process of teaching a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically." The word uncritically is underlined here because that's the key point of the process- to stop questioning, criticizing, and thinking for yourself. These DEI initiatives are what taught me to think critically in the first place, as reflected in my previously submitted testimony.

Indoctrination is one thing that causes victims of abuse- systemic abuse especially- to never question their experience and assume it as normal. If you've never been to any other pediatrician, you probably assumed the Blankenburgs behaved in a normal way. Critical theory classes fall under Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion topics in higher education- we honestly keep children further in the dark by not offering them sooner, denying them the tools to understand things like consent in an age appropriate way. Did you know that other countries have found a way to integrate sexual education throughout a child's academic career? That probably sets off alarm bells in American minds, because we aren't thinking about it critically- sexual education also includes consent, and teaching elementary school children that it's okay to say no to being touched is often the extent of education necessary. Why would you not want your child to understand consent? Do you want to prop up abusers by keeping your children in the dark?

Before you worry about what will indoctrinate our children, you must answer to the children that are being indoctrinated now. The experts on the topic of DEI and higher education have illustrated the cost this will bring to our state, and I am telling you the cost it will bring to the children that will become your constituents in a few short years. America seems to only respond to extremes, so I'm going to take this time to go there for you and discuss why critical theory is the first defense in combatting cult thought and tactics through a personal experience... a personal experience that many teens in Ohio and throughout the United States are facing as I speak to you now.

I am a survivor of the troubled teen industry. For those unaware, the troubled teen industry is a broad label given to residential psychiatric, addiction, and behavioral health care facilities for minors. The concept originated with a literal cult in the 1960s called Synanon, using behavior modification techniques like attack therapy that are still used in programs today. Many of these are religious in origin, including conversion therapy for LGBTQIA+ youth. I am far from an expert on the topic of the troubled teen industry, but I'm the closest thing to one that's crossed this threshold. Much of the information in testimony I provide is sourced from the survivor driven efforts of the nonprofit I partner with to track these programs, KidsOverProfits.Org - I am also training to become a peer support provider and have spoken on podcasts about my experiences.

The troubled teen industry also includes wilderness programs, like the one where a 12 year old boy

named Clark Harman died last year. We have one run by Menonites here in our fair state. Though there aren't as many programs in Ohio, we still send our children out of state to these abusive facilities- high profile politicians like Matt Bevin send their children to them, and other high profile politicians like Mitt Romney reap the rewards. But these aren't just the children of the rich and famous, or even the dwindling middle class- these are foster children in our state sent out of state to be abused in the name of treatment.

And they are brain washed to believe it's for the best, that this abuse is normal that this abuse is therapeutic and helpful. They are indoctrinated to believe that it is their fault to survive, and to not question or criticize lest they face worse abuse or even death, when the truth is that this is a troubled parent industry and the parents are often the source of the problem.

You allow educational consultants like Andrew J. Erkis to operate in your state, a man who profits off of the transport agencies he outsources to- which are literally paid to kidnap your children with few restrictions if you have the cash- and send these kids to abusive facilities out of state for profit. You have let him operate for god knows how long, considering he reaped the profit of a referral from my parents in 2005 to the now shuttered Rancho Valmora in New Mexico. Can you guess why they were closed?

For a decade, I thought that what I endured was normal- starvation, seclusion, being restrained by a man who could play as a linebacker in the NFL as a fragile 13 year old child, to name a few. I came out easy considering I went to four programs and they all had issues of physical and sexual abuse. What about the children at Foundations for Living in Mansfield, or Fox Run Center in Belmont County? How are they going to escape the indoctrination of the abuse when you close down the programs (including regional and rural campuses) that provide the tools to understand that what they are experiencing right now is not normal? Most of the politicians I've spoken to don't even know what the troubled teen industry is, let alone how many programs are open in our state.

I reiterate to you again: before you focus on higher education, focus on the children and the problem you didn't even know has been festering in your own backyard. Vote against House Bill 6 and direct your attention to something you can fix, something your people will thank you for, and something that will ensure a brighter future for our state.