

Testimony of Jazmin Alastair
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Representative Tom Young, Chair
March 9, 2025

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio and members of the Higher Education Committee; Thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony against Senate Bill 83.

Today I add my testimony opposing this bill, amongst hundreds of others. Those who have shared their heartfelt stories, researched data, and compelling arguments. Although my statement is brief and simple, it is my right to have my voice heard and be reflected upon by you, the leaders whose sworn duty it is to enact the will of the people.

For myself, I have recently started my career in higher education, working at a public university in student affairs. My first and foremost responsibility is to support students and foster a space of belonging with them. A lot of the work I'm doing is being disrupted. The goals I created, the vision I had for this role, and the relationships I have started building, now feel trivial because of the looming doom that our offices will be dissolved. I've finally found my community post graduation and now it's being taken away, not only that, the career I'm pursuing is being bastardized, and attacked. The work I'm doing today, which at the core is supporting students' sense of self and community, is being labeled as unlawful and immoral. If you truly saw what I get the privilege of experiencing every day, you'd understand how essential these programs and services are.

Legislation such as this, that aims to silence, divide, and isolate the voices of its citizens is one that is unconstitutional, undemocratic, and outright immoral. As a college student I studied what is often over simplified and misunderstood as DEI, social justice warriors, the "woke" agenda. Specifically I researched how our social, government, and community systems impact and manifests in our education institutions. What I learned from the candid and open dialogue with my peers and mentors, are things that made me a better citizen, a better person, a more generous neighbor, and a more caring friend. Who I am today, and what I believe in, is less about the curriculum that was given to me, and more about how we treated each other as we learned hard truths about how this nation, and the world came to be what it is today. I know, this is not the time to repress and refuse the truth of our country's history and the consequences we are experiencing because of the decisions made by leadership who were once in your place.

This is time to build our skills of listening, compassion, respect, dialogue, critical thought, innovation, and community building (all values that were empowered within my studies). This is the time to teach the next generation of students how to come together, recognizing that our vast experience, knowledge, and views of the world, are at the foundation of this Great Experiment we call the United States. There is no easy solution to the challenges we face today. This bill is not a solution and if it passes, it will be another contributing stain in our history books,

one in which children years from now will have to reconcile with, because of the decision you, our leaders made today. There is another way, let's build it together.

Jazmin Alastair
Ohio Citizen

The views I express here today are my own as an individual and do not reflect the views of the University of Cincinnati