

Maria Vitória de Rezende Grisi
Testimony on SB 1

Higher Education Committee
Chair Kristina D. Roegner

February 11, 2025

Chairman Roegner, vice chair Cirino, ranking member Ingram, and members of the Higher Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Maria Vitória, and I am a fourth-year Ph.D. student in the Studies of the Portuguese-Speaking World program at OSU, where I also serve as a Graduate Teaching Associate. I am strongly opposed to Senate Bill 1.

A couple of years ago I was standing here to testify against SB83. Now, two years later, I find myself back here, staring at a familiar question: who asked for this bill to come back? And this time, I'm not just frustrated—I'm curious. I have questions, and I think this is the perfect space to ask them. After all, I believe in the power of dialogue, the necessity of data, the value of thoughtful public policies, and the irreplaceable importance of academic freedom. So, with that in mind, I'd like to share some comments and questions about the new version of SB 83—[Senate Bill 1](#). I will not be talking about DEI policies, the elected punch bag of the moment. I believe enough has been said about the topic. I do have questions, though.

If there's one thing I've gained over these past two years, it's confidence. And with this confidence, I've started to wonder about a few things—things I'd like to share. Don't get me wrong, I'm proud of my journey, of everything I've achieved through years of studying and working. But I still haven't managed to find in myself the kind of self-esteem and audacity some

politicians seem to have in spades. You know, if the pharmaceutical industry could bottle up their self-assurance and sell it as a pill, I'd be the first in line to buy it.

Senate Bill 1, as introduced by Senator Jerry C. Cirino, reads, "The institution declares that it will educate students by means of free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry to seek the truth." Now, I'd like to ask the sponsors of this bill to do us all a favor and enlighten us: what exactly is "the truth"? Please, define it. Explain it. But here's the catch—be careful. You don't want to force your views on your audience. No, you need to present the meaning of "truth" in a way that's unbiased, non-ideological, and actually worth listening to. And while you're at it, why not share with the rest of us when was the last time you stepped into one of those classrooms you're so quick to accuse of indoctrination? Better yet, don't just tell us—show us. Present the data. Prove to us the urgency, the importance, and the necessity of this bill. Because without evidence, this isn't a bill—it's an assumption.

It's becoming clearer to me that there's a certain class of people who are terrified of losing their position. These are the kind of people who fear diversity—of people, of ideas, of perspectives—because in a truly diverse environment, they'd be stripped of their privileges. They'd be just like the rest of us: neither better nor worse. At the heart of it, there's a deep-seated fear of realizing that we might all be ordinary, that we might all be the same. But here's the thing: diversity isn't a threat—it's a gift. It pushes us to see the world through a wider lens, to question our place in society, and to grow. And honestly, that's more than okay. It's necessary.

No, I don't think a class about the Holocaust should promote a debate on whether it was good or bad or if it happened or not. I believe in a classroom where historical FACTS should be presented and the students should reflect on them to think of a better future. If the class demands that we learn different methods of analysing facts, then we will present all methods. Methods are

not the same as facts. The classroom is not a place for ideology. If you want to believe a disturbed vision of the Holocaust, you do it at your house, with your friends. Universities will not lose their standards of excellence because some people feel like their vision are better than facts. As for “controversial topics” such as climate change, for example. Instructors must present the endless data, and students must use their skills to debate the topic. Such debates have never been unwelcomed but they will also not change facts.

I'd like to end with this: I still want to believe this country is a democracy and a republic—a place where representatives of the people actually listen to the voices of the people. Let's not forget, politicians aren't special. They're citizens, just like the rest of us. Maybe it's time they remembered that, especially when they sit down to write bills that come across as so patronizing.