

Testimony of Olivia Gallo, a Student Organizer at Miami University
Before the House and Higher Education Committee
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair
November 27th, 2023

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education Committee,

My name is Olivia Gallo, and I am a student at Miami University. I was an organizer with the Ohio Student Activist Alliance, fighting for true equity, equality, and empowerment on Miami's campus. I do not represent Miami University but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

I am now a 3rd year Organizational Leadership and Social Justice major at Miami University. While this combination sounds a little strange, it was very deeply thought out. I decided to major in these two topics because I love people, I love learning about their experiences, and I love making the world a better place. I want to know more about encouraging people's strengths while fighting for equity and equality for all.

It is heartbreaking to me that we are here again, for a third time. That students have to take time out of our classwork, out of our busy schedules to advocate against a bill that would ruin our experience with higher education. Here we are again taking time out of our education to fight specifically for our education. Seems ironic to me.

As a student at Miami University, I have seen the benefit of a liberal education. I have found immense value in learning from the perspectives of others and learning about all the different subjects that Miami has to offer. From my time at the University, I feel like my educational horizons have expanded more than I ever could have imagined. Senator Cirino in his past opinion columns stated that his bill would "ensure intellectual diversity", and he felt that the people opposing the bill would "want to protect their woke fiefdom so they can continue to churn out like-minded and intolerant opponents of intellectual diversity." (Cirino). The truth of these two statements is that SB 1 does not promote intellectual freedom, it limits it. They (proponents of SB 1) want to put students in classrooms that restrict the ability to hear the perspectives of others, they want to restrict classrooms that discuss the real history and not the whitewashed one that is forced down our throats for years. There is not an ounce of actual freedom represented in this bill.

The argument for this bill is that conservative professors feel as though they cannot share their opinions in the classroom. I can completely understand that. People want to have a voice. I don't think we should be silencing anyone's voice, unless it spews hate. Yet, SB 1 completely contradicts the supposed intent of this bill because if this bill is supposed to allow everyone to share their diverse thoughts, why does it put limits on "controversial topics"? Why does this bill silence students and teachers' ability to gather in support of a "controversial topic"? There is no promotion of the diversity of thought here. There is censorship and censorship only.

The first time I wrote testimony against this bill, I threatened my education at Miami University. I said that, "As an out-of-state student, paying out-of-state tuition, I can say that I would reconsider my enrollment at Miami University if SB 1 passed.". Today, as a junior in college, I can say that I would truly discourage people from attending Miami University if this bill passed. I love my education, I love my time here at Miami, and I would be incredibly saddened to not share that with others. From a student perspective, this bill limits the safety, freedom, and education that students would receive in Ohio. This bill perpetuates hate and silences diverse voices. The "intellectual freedom" that this bill advocates for are the perspectives of privileged men that we have heard for centuries. We need to let other people speak. We need justice for the truth of education.

Speaking personally to the senators that support this bill, I ask you to consider the students who will actually be sitting in classrooms in Ohio. We ask for you to not speak for us, but let us speak through you. Put value in what we value, the freedom of inclusivity and love in our classrooms. A diverse education is one where everyone feels like their experiences and contributions are valued, and that in turn makes students feel loved in their classrooms. Don't you want to show love to the students that you represent?

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on Senate Bill 1. Thank you for your time.