

Senate Bill 40: “Forming Open and Robust University Minds Act”

Hello Madam Chairman and committee members. My name is Sophia Fisher and I'm here on behalf of Young Americans for Liberty. I am a college student attending the University of Akron where I am the President of a club on campus called *Turning Point USA*. As a group, we have had plenty of incidents where our right to free speech has been infringed upon. As the President of that chapter, I've personally been the subject of intolerance and harassment for having a different opinion. Today, I stand here in support of a bill that will allow for open debate and the protection of free speech on our college campuses.

We have lost the ability to have civil discussions if it differs from the mainstream belief. If you're not in support of the current policy of the campus, you're deemed intolerant, persecuted, and not granted equal opportunities. Disagreement does not have to rise to this level of violence and intolerance. I am in support of both sides having the right to freedom of expression. I recognize we have situations in which certain types of speech must be limited. However, we have put too many restrictions on speech today to where the idea of open debate doesn't exist anymore. We must bring back impartiality on our campuses. University is a place for open debate and different opinions. As my father once told me, college used to be a place where ideas were discussed and the fear of being persecuted wasn't an issue. Nowadays, that is not the case. Universities are meant to be places where ideas are debated not dictated. Let's return to a time when both sides weren't painted as villains and instead viewed as human beings with a different opinion. I am in support of a liberal right to speak up. I am in support of conservative right to

speak up. I believe in this so much to where I've built a platform called "the Voices of Reason" that allows for civil discussion and the expression of different ideas. Tolerance is not the adoption of another's beliefs but rather the practice of allowing different ideas to be present.

I am proud to work alongside *Young Americans for Liberty* and *Turning Point USA* since both groups believe in the importance of free speech. As an active citizen and current college student, I hope this bill will allow for the protection of differing opinions and open debate on our college campuses. Thank you.