Chair Young, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the House Higher Education Committee:

My name is Amy Fritsche and I am a professor of Theatre at Kent State University, where I have taught for nine years. I do not represent Kent State University but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to House Bill 151.

Theatre has the power to entertain, but more importantly theatre has the power to be a mirror to society and it can raise questions about the actions of government, groups of people, and individuals. It can give voice to the voiceless, unveil truths forgotten, and can challenge the way things have always been done. Theatre has the potential not only to spark conversation and investigation of the content of a given play or musical but to take it a step further and create awareness that leads to action.

If this bill were to pass, and the ambiguous language surrounding the mandates remain, it would mean that the majority of plays and musicals written would fall under the scrutiny of lines 183-186 "Controversial belief or policy" means any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate change, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion."

Theatre is meant to create debates, cause critical thinking, and spark the evaluation of one's own bias. The power of theatre makes it almost impossible to comply with line *416-417* "Does the faculty member create a classroom atmosphere free of political, racial, gender, and religious bias?"

Here are some examples from shows you might be familiar with. *Oklahoma!* on the surface appears to be about the "the wavin' wheat can sure smell sweet"[1] but in truth it investigates masculinity, suicide, murder, and rape. *Fiddler on the Roof* appears to be about "Tradition"[2] but it examines the intersectionality of religion and how that diversity and the lack of tolerance for inclusion leads the Jewish population to immigrate from Russia. *Hamilton* might be about our history and the "Room Where It Happens"[3] but it powerfully displays the necessity of equity and inclusion showing us that races other than white should have *always* been in the room where it happens.

I could go on regarding the multitude of shows that hold "controversial beliefs" including: *Death of A Salesman, The Crucible, Angels in America, Rent, A Raisin In the Sun, Wicked, Doubt*, and the whole of Shakespeare's cannon. The musical *South Pacific* song "Carefully Taught"[4] says it best "You've got to be taught to hate and fear. You've got to be taught from year to year. It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear. You've got to be carefully taught. You've got to be taught to be afraid of people whose eyes are oddly made. And people whose skin is a diff'rent shade. You've got to be carefully taught. You've got to be taught before it's too late. Before you are six or seven

or eight. To hate all the people your relatives hate. You've got to be carefully taught." These lyrics are a warning of what happens when we take away "Controversial Beliefs" out of all schools including college classrooms.

Thank you for reading my testimony and please vote NO on H.B 151.

Sincerely,

Amy Fritsche

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Citation

1. *Rodgers, Richard, 1902-1979. Oklahoma! : Original Movie Soundtrack Recording. [United States] : Indianapolis, Ind. :Broadway Angel ; Mfd. for BMG Direct Marketing, 1993*

2. *Bock, Jerry. Fiddler on the Roof : (from the Broadway Musical "Fiddler on the Roof"). [United States] :RCA Victor, 1964..*

3. Miranda, Lin-Manuel. *Hamilton: An American Musical. Hamilton: The Revolution,* edited by Jeremy McCarter, Grand Central Publishing, 2016

4. Rodgers, Richard, et al. *South Pacific.* New York, N.Y., CBS, 1986.