

Chairman Young and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Ashley Reynolds. I am a resident of suburban Chicago, and a freshman at Miami University. I am strongly opposed to House Bill 151 and its companion bill in the Ohio Senate.

The college decision process was difficult for me, as it was for all students. I wasn't entirely sure of what I wanted to do in life, but what I did know was that I wanted to work for the people. In Miami, I discovered something incredible, and exactly what I needed. A community of learning, of diversity, of not quite justice, but a goal to get there. I became a Social Justice major at Miami, with a minor in Spanish and General Business. I traveled five hours away, rejected countless schools, in order to come here, to Miami, in order to help make the world a better place. This bill stands against not only everything I and this university stand for, but also against my educational and financial involvement in this school. I would not be here were it not for this major, and I will not lose my education to a bill that seeks to support truth while in reality extinguishing it.

I have read the testimonies and seen the concern. Free speech is a highly contested issue in this country, but this bill in seeking to uphold it is actually tearing it apart. I do agree that discrimination against conservative professors is wrong. I do agree that universities should provide room for free thought of ideals. However, just like any law, there are exceptions, and one of the exceptions for free speech is when a false statement can cause harm. Like yelling fire in a crowded building where there is no fire, spewing ideas such as the failure of the last election or conspiracy theories of vaccines cause real and true harm. These ideas are incorrect, unfounded, and wrong. Professors that are afraid to say otherwise and feel that their rights are being threatened cannot be supported at the cost of diversity, equity, inclusion, and all of our other "diverse topics". There is a difference between true diversity of thought and the false stories that are told throughout our country.

This bill seeks to prevent censorship by expanding it, to protect rights by destroying them. "Controversial issues" defined in this bill such as diversity, climate policies, abortion, marriage, foreign politics, and immigration policy do not drive students to hate this country. They drive students to repair this country, to try to uphold the very ideals we wanted present in the first place. In this country, we hold that all people are created equal. All that these controversial issues try to do is actually enforce this idea.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this incredibly destructive bill that would not only hinder but destroy Ohio education.

Thank you again for this opportunity.