

Testimony of Assistant Professor Lauren Vachon  
Before the House Higher Education Committee  
Rep. Tom Young, Chair  
May 17, 2023

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

My name is Lauren Vachon, and I am an assistant professor of LGBTQ Studies at Kent State University, where I have taught for 10 years. I do not represent Kent State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Substitute House Bill 151.

I teach LGBTQ Studies at Kent State. Yes: I am the monster. I'm who this bill targets. I'm the person the bill's writers think is indoctrinating students. Forcing them to agree with me. Pressuring them to think like I do.

I'm here to tell you today: that is not true. I have never failed a student because their politics are different from mine. I have never graded student work based on whether I "agree" with their opinion. Students who have strenuously disagreed with me throughout the entire semester have gotten A's in my courses.

Every course I teach has learning outcomes. They are listed in the syllabus. The assignments in my courses are designed to test student achievement against those learning outcomes. When students demonstrate they've mastered the outcomes, they earn high grades. That's it. Period. And I promise you: None of those learning outcomes are "must agree with Professor Vachon" or "must morph into a liberal by the end of the course."

And: if a student believes they've been treated unfairly because of politics: we have a grade-complaint policy for that! We have specific processes through which students to complain about grades or professors. Complaints about unfair treatment are serious matters — and professors have been disciplined for bad behavior.

You are being lied to. What you think is happening on campuses is not happening. I know a lot of professors. We all — every one of us — want our students to think independently, and to think critically. You've been told by so many of us testifying today: we're not doing what the bill's authors think we're doing. They're lying to you.

I exist at my institution to teach students. To serve students. I take that mandate seriously. The faculty and staff I know at Kent State are also busy working hard to serve our students. So, I ask you: Listen to our students. They do not want this bill. They are outraged by this bill. They want their professors to be able to continue teaching them freely and without fear of big government coming after them.

When university administrations don't want the bill, and faculty don't want the bill, and students really, really, really don't want the bill, you might want to think: is this a bad bill? Should I vote for this bill? It is a bad bill, and you should not.