

Testimony of Lynette Phillips, PhD  
Before the House Higher Education Committee  
Rep. Tom Young, Chair  
May 15, 2023

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

My name is Lynette Phillips, and I am a professor of public health at Kent State University, where I have taught for 13 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 also am a parent of a previous student at an Ohio state university and an incoming student this fall semester. My testimony is based on my experience in all three of my roles.

As a private citizen of Ohio, I am opposed to this bill because of the impact it will have on the quality of higher education in the state. Specifically, high quality faculty will be less likely to stay at Ohio universities, and new applicants will decrease dramatically. This is already being seen in states with similar bills in the pipeline, such as Florida and Texas. Student applicants are also likely to decrease, and with less and less funding coming to the state colleges and universities, all will rely more heavily on student enrollment. Universities, and states, that do not support diversity, equity, and inclusion, will be left behind compared to the rest of the country and the world. **Ultimately, this cascade effect will lead to less revenue for the state as a whole and loss of respect from those we need to support our state.**

As a parent of an incoming university student, I am opposed to this bill due to the limitations on the universities' ability to support most programs focused on inclusion. This covers ALL inclusions, even those around more traditionally conservative groups. My son made his college choice based in part on the university's commitment to supporting all students and the anticipated diversity in student population that occurs due to that commitment. This bill will discourage students from many groups from attending, making the student population less diverse on all measures. **It will allow discrimination on campuses to go unchecked and make students' lives unsafe.** I have heard from many of my parent friends whose children are now in high school that they do not want their children to attend an Ohio university if this bill passes.

Finally, as a faculty member, I am opposed to the bill's measures that will severely affect my ability to teach and mentor my students effectively. Our students rely on us to help them move fully into adulthood and either the job or higher academic arena. They also are dealing with unprecedented levels of personal issues. Removing the current supportive and protective programs in place, especially for the populations most at risk of failure that are targeted by this bill, will leave them vulnerable and unsupported. If my workload increases by the 25% stated, **I will not be able to spend the necessary individual time with students to do the myriad of support activities they require.** If half of my performance is judged by student opinion, I will be solely designing my courses to make students happy, which will not allow me to provide the high level of education I currently do. Student feedback is inherently biased, with those who are either very happy or very unhappy providing the majority of the input, and it is usually not

constructive feedback. The measures required to implement this change would be costly and ineffective in impacting the areas this bill purports to address.

There are many more aspects of this bill that are concerning at best and harmful at worst, but the other one of particular concern for me is the requirement to post detailed syllabi on a university site fully accessible to the public. This has serious security ramifications, both for the university and for faculty. We already share our syllabi with anyone who asks. In fact, I encourage anyone to attend my in person classes if there are concerns in any way about what and how I teach. While I do not speak for them, I am positive that my colleagues across the state feel the same. The entire premise of this bill seems to be based on the assumption that there is widespread inequity across colleges and universities in the state. However, the facts do not support that, and the supporters of this bill have not provided sufficient evidence to the contrary. It is based on perceptions of higher education that are not correct, and **it will have a severe and lasting negative effect on the state of Ohio if passed.**