

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

Please complete the Witness Information Form before testifying:

Date: May 15, 2023

Name: Mark J. Curnutte

Are you representing: Yourself, as resident, homeowner, taxpayer, voter living in Cincinnati, OH

Organization (If Applicable):

Position/Title:

Address: 508 Baum St.

City: State: Zip: Cincinnati, Ohio, 45202

Best Contact Telephone: Email: (513) 348-5237 / markcurnutte@aol.com

Do you wish to be added to the committee notice email distribution list? Yes

Business before the committee

Legislation (Bill/Resolution Number): HB 151

Specific Issue: Higher Education

Are you testifying as a: Opponent

Will you have a written statement, visual aids, or other material to distribute? No

(If yes, please send an electronic version of the documents, if possible, to the Chair's office prior to committee. You may also submit hard copies to the Chair's staff prior to committee.)

How much time will your testimony require? Written testimony only

Please provide a brief statement on your position:

Testimony of Mark J. Curnutte
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 Mark Curnutte and I am an instructor in the Department of Sociology and Gerontology at Miami University, where I have taught for four years. It is my second career, following 34 years as a newspaper reporter and Pulitzer Prize winner at The Cincinnati Enquirer. I do not represent The Enquirer or Miami University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Substitute House Bill 151.

I am a native of Illinois who came to Ohio to attend Miami University in 1980. I met the mother of my children there, and we decided to settle in Ohio in 1993, in part, because of the high quality and relative affordability of Ohio's public colleges and universities. One of our children attended Kent State University, and another is a graduate like his parents, of Miami and is today a Hamilton County Deputy Sheriff. Our third child is currently halfway through his master's degree in a genetics-related field at the University of Cincinnati. My younger brother followed me from Illinois to attend Miami and graduated in 1994. He lives and works in Hamilton County, and his oldest son just graduated last month from the University of Cincinnati with a business degree.

I have many concerns about HB 151 and its companion bill in Ohio's Senate. Among those — as a 34-year newspaper reporting veteran — are what I believe is its unconstitutional curtailing of free speech and its prohibitions of faculty organizing and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives on

campuses that are vital for our state's economic competitiveness.

I'd like to point out, related to its anti-DEI position, that the bill will likely prevent thousands of students annually from attending Ohio's public colleges as out-of-state students and hundreds more coming here from other countries and paying international tuition.

Further and related, I'd like to point out that Ohio's only gain in population from 2001 to 2021 have been in non-white races and ethnicities, according to the U.S. Census:

Link provided:

<https://usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/state/ohio/?endDate=2021-01-01&startDate=2001-01-01>

- The white population has fallen from 84 percent of the state's total to 78 percent in 2021, a total of loss of roughly 400,000 people.
- Latino-Hispanic, Asian, and mixed-race Census demographic populations all have more than doubled in Ohio, and the Black population increased more than 1 percentage point of the state's total.

Ohio is becoming a more diverse state, and these students, as children of taxpaying families — not just white students — deserve to see themselves and their histories accurately taught in our public education system. (As a quick side note, I am a Stage 3 colorectal cancer survivor whose life was saved

at the Barrett Cancer Center and University of Cincinnati Medical Center largely by a Nigerian-born oncologist who also teaches in the medical school.)

My last point is this: Ohio's public high-quality, fully accredited universities and colleges are an attraction that keep young people at home and continue to draw others — like my brother and me — from out of state and whose per-hour tuition is double that of in-state students.

We hear continuously about the need for economic development, jobs, and a young, dynamic workforce. All studies show that economies that thrive and grow are increasingly diverse and draw from national and international talent pools. Public education and the state's economy are intertwined.

Ohio is facing not only a brain drain but already has experienced a dramatic loss of people in their economic primes.

- The population of people ages 35-49 dropped 19 percent in Ohio from 2001 to 2021.
- Meanwhile, the population of people 65 and older increased 39 percent.

Representative Young, I respectfully ask you, the bill's sponsor and co-sponsors, this committee, and all of Ohio's state representatives and representative to seriously consider these data-driven facts. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Please be advised that this form and any materials (written or otherwise) submitted or presented to this committee are records that may be requested by the public and may be published online.