

Testimony of Theresa Kulbaga, Ph.D.  
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 Theresa Kulbaga, and I am a professor of English at Miami University, where I have taught for 16 years. I do not represent Miami, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Substitute House Bill 151.

HB 151 is bad for Ohio students and bad for the Ohio economy. It will threaten higher education institutions' ability to serve our students well and will keep them from being competitive in the national and global job market after they graduate.

HB 151 hurts our students by interfering with their ability to access concepts, courses, and conversations that foster self-understanding and an understanding of the world they live and work in. It puts legislators in charge of course content rather than experts in their fields. HB 151 will leave Ohio graduates unprepared to work in, and contribute to, our world.

Ohio is diverse, and Ohio students reflect that diversity in race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity, and sexuality. We need to serve *all* of our students. We also need to create an environment in which they can learn and think critically. But the bill does the opposite by explicitly censoring course content. Employers in the local, national, and global economy want students who are able to live and work in a diverse world. This bill threatens their ability to be marketable.

HB 151 also hurts our students by taking faculty time away from teaching to handle unnecessary, burdensome, and duplicative administrative work. For instance, requiring faculty to post detailed course syllabi online in advance of the start of the semester is not realistic. Effective teaching requires pedagogical flexibility, and teachers often respond to student needs that present themselves after the semester has already begun. Thus the posted syllabi would likely be inaccurate.

Finally, HB 151 hurts our students by harming faculty collective bargaining rights. Faculty working conditions are student learning conditions. When faculty working conditions suffer, the bargaining process is necessary to resolve disputes. Without the right to bargain about tenure and promotion and workload, and without the right to strike that other employees have, higher education workers will be more easily exploited and overworked—and less able to educate and advocate for the students we serve.

Higher education is a major driver of the Ohio economy. Part of its work in the local, national, and global economy is to educate our citizenry to face the challenges ahead with an understanding of the diverse world we live in. This bill threatens that important work.