

Opposition Testimony – SB83
Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee Hearing
Date
Presented by Cara Dillon, Ph.D.

Chairman Cirino, Vice Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, my name is Dr. Cara Dillon, and I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts with the committee about SB83 at this important stage of the legislative process. I am a school psychologist and psychology researcher. I am concerned about the future teaching in my profession with certain sections of this bill, and I hope to teach school psychology and its history in its entirety. That includes dark portions of our history. Conversations about race. About sex and gender. About systemic racism. I fear this bill would eliminate discussion of the history of psychology that we do not wish to repeat.

For example, cognitive assessment is a core class in most school psychology curriculum. The history of cognitive assessment is one riddled with racism. As one example, the United States utilized intelligence scores as a way to justify the sterilization of individuals deemed too cognitively damaged to reproduce. Over 60,000 people were sterilized against their will because of this policy. Black women were more likely to be targeted for sterilization than White women. This is America's dark history of eugenics, and psychology gave them the test to do it. A test that was surrounded by controversy and has been since redeveloped and changed because of these problems. We are obligated to teach this information. Systemic racism can be described as policies and practices at an organization level and resulting in disproportionate treatment of people by race. The United States approved of these actions through the Buck v. Bell Supreme Court decision, leading to a clear example of systemic racism. If we teach this and call this past action systemic racism, will we be accused of not holding free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry as stated in Sec. 3345.0216, subsection B? Will we be accused of holding left wing ideologies in an infraction on subsection C? Must we present "both sides" of this horrible practice?

A more recent example is the disproportionate discipline of Black boys in schools. There is a clear history of Black boys being suspended and expelled at higher rates than their White peers for similar behaviors. This has led to generations of Black boys not being able to access the public education setting like their peers which we know is one basis of the school to prison pipeline. Without the ability to discuss this problem, we cannot hope to ensure that our public schools treat every child with the same standards. Moreover, this leads to discussions about better discipline systems and evidence-based practices like Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports that diminishes these disproportionate practices. If we teach about this problem and call this bias and racism, will we be accused of not holding free, open, and rigorous intellectual inquiry? Will this be another infraction?

As an aside, the National Association of School Psychologists includes classes for diversity, equity, and inclusion in order to recognize programs as approved. It is apart of the core competencies for school psychologists. This bill would eliminate all Ohio school psychology programs' ability to be approved and therefore, our state would not be developing more school psychologists. In the current mental health crisis of our day, we can all see how that would be detrimental.

I simply wish for our field to continue to learn and grow as we understand our history. These are only two examples of vital discussions held in school psychology classrooms. If we do not learn from our history, call racism what it is, we are doomed to repeat it. Do not bar our classrooms from teaching the horrors of our past so that we can build a brighter future. I oppose this bill.

Thank you,

Cara L. Dillon

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