

Testimony of Christopher P. Dum, Ph.D.  
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair  
April 19, 2023

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee:

My name is Christopher Dum and I am a professor of Sociology and Criminology at Kent State University, where I have taught for 9 years. I do not represent Kent State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

I am deeply concerned about SB 83 and the unprecedented political interference and micromanagement that it would inflict on Ohio's colleges and universities. I ask that you do not support this legislation.

SB 83 is a series of contradictions that claims to promote "intellectual diversity" while simultaneously attempting to legislate the content and manner in which certain topics can be addressed. This would have a chilling effect on academic freedom, and would make it more difficult for Ohio's colleges and universities to attract students and faculty. Passage of this bill would make it almost impossible to teach my courses in Sociology and Criminology, which cover important current events concerning crime and justice, as well as explorations into behavior that some might consider controversial, such as physician assisted suicide. However, I make it a point to begin every semester by reminding students that their grade will NEVER be affected by their political views and that their grade will only reflect their understanding of course material, empirical facts, and their ability to articulate this understanding. If we can trust 18 year olds to vote and to drive, then we can trust them to use their critical thinking skills to assess course material and handle topics that some might find controversial.

SB 83 also would create an inordinate amount of unworkable mandates, most of which are simply more burdensome versions of what our colleges and universities already do. Giving administrators, faculty, and the chancellor more unfunded busy work takes away from student learning and adds to bureaucracy. This does not enhance higher education.

There are real problems in higher education that we need to address: increased tuition and debt, student retention and completion, and reductions in academic programs and full-time faculty positions. SB 83 gets at none of that, and will do nothing to add value to our colleges and universities.

Respectfully, I ask that you reject this bill, which could do real, irreversible damage to Ohio higher education.

Sincerely,

Christopher P. Dum