Testimony of Jeanie Lau
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair
April 14, 2023

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

My name is Jeanie Lau, and I am a professor of Physics at The Ohio State University, where I have taught for 6 years. I do not represent OSU, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 83.

I am deeply troubled by Sec. 3345.451, 3345.452, and 3345.453 (lines 409-520 in the bill as introduced). What introduced here are extremely detrimental to the higher education and student learning in the state of Ohio, for the following reasons:

1. These sections effectively removes tenure in public universities of Ohio. Tenure is the foundation of American higher education system, endowing faculty with the freedom to pursue knowledge, without pressure from political, religious, or commercial interests, or personal likes or dislikes of department chairs and deans. In areas of science, technological, engineering and mathematics (STEM), **tenure also allow faculty to pursue challenging or high risk-high reward endeavors in research, such as those that led to the invention of laser, without worrying about "underperforming" in a number of years.**

2. Tenure is instrumental in attracting, recruiting and retaining talents both within and without Ohio. In STEM areas, university professors are already much underpaid compared to their industrial counterparts. For example, I have been a professor for 19 years, and a fresh PhD graduate from my group joined Apple and is earning a higher salary. **Should the bill pass, fewer and lesser talents will choose Ohio universities, or choose academia at all. Ohio will soon face a brain drain of talents to other states.** Yet, a well-educated STEM workforce, which is exactly what Ohio needs at this junction of revolutions brought by quantum computation and artificial intelligence, entails world-class faculty in Ohio universities.

3. **Using student evaluation as a part of the metrics for teaching performance is problematic and counter-productive.** It is well-documented that student evaluation is inversely correlated with learning. For example, students learn much more from a teacher who sets high standards and expectation than from one who gives out easy homework and exams, yet the ratings of the former will be much lower.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote "No" on this bill.