

Testimony of Cynthia J. Osborn, Ph.D., LPCC-S, LICDC
Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Senator Jerry Cirino, Chair
15 May 2023

Chair Cirino, Vice Chair Rulli, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee: My name is **Cynthia Osborn** and I am Professor of Counselor Education and Supervision at Kent State University, where I have taught for 26 years. I also am licensed by the state of Ohio as a professional clinical counselor with supervisor endorsement (LPCC-S) and as a chemical dependency counselor (LICDC). I coordinate the **addictions counseling** certificate program at Kent State University and am the project director/principal investigator of a 4-year **federally funded workforce development grant** (from the Health Resources and Services Administration; the only one awarded to an organization in Ohio in 2021) to supply the state of Ohio with more addiction care providers.

Let it be clear that I do not represent Kent State University. I am submitting testimony as a **private citizen in strong opposition to Senate Bill (SB) 83**.

I am gravely concerned about the details in SB 83 and its effect on the current and future faculty workforce in the state of Ohio. My three specific concerns are detailed here:

1. The Sub-section (D.1.b of Sec. 3345.45) on workload policies (lines 1016-1024) has been revised in such a way that it would **increase the workload of Kent State University's full-time tenured faculty and tenure-track faculty on 9-month appointments by 25%!** This mandate, unilaterally imposed by the State, would be the single most radical change in the terms and conditions of employment of Kent State University's tenured faculty and tenure-track faculty in over 50 years. Such a workload policy for full-time faculty will significantly curtail efforts to attract well qualified faculty to the state of Ohio, particularly at research institutions such as Kent State University. This would have a chilling effect on the state of Ohio not being able to secure federally funded workforce development grants, such as the one I currently oversee, to benefit **undergraduate students**. Current and future students in state-supported institutions of higher education will thus be **deprived of** well-informed, renowned, intellectually curious, and supportive faculty members; as well as **federally funded scholarships** to support their academic pursuits in high need areas, such as addictions care.
2. Although SB 83 styles itself as a bill promoting free speech and intellectual diversity, it contains provisions (even in the substitute version) that would **explicitly censor the University's speech** (lines 744-748, 752, 754, and 795-797). This means the bill would explicitly prohibit a university from opposing systemic racism, sexism, and/or discrimination based on LGBTQ+ status. It would explicitly prohibit a university from endorsing the notion of ally-ship, social justice, diversity, equity, or inclusion. And it would explicitly prohibit a university from endorsing any climate policies, or even the idea of a sustainable future. This is unacceptable given the advancement of human rights in the United States over the past 60 years. Squelching this type of speech is unAmerican. And it is a disservice to an increasingly diverse student population at state-supported institutions of higher education who we are preparing to be at the forefront of advancements in their selected disciplines.
3. Although substitute SB 83 contains a provision (lines 892-895) that makes clear it would not violate the law for a faculty expert to present content that involved a controversial belief or policy, specified concepts, or specified ideologies, the bill would still have a **chilling effect on the academic freedom of faculty**. My specific area of addictions counseling requires students to be exposed to a variety of theories or ideologies of addiction (e.g., public health, medical/disease) and evidence-based practices (e.g., harm reduction, mindfulness-based recovery, medications for opioid use disorder) if we as a state are to credibly address the ongoing crisis of drug use and the devastating effects fentanyl,

Xylazine, and other drugs are having on both young and old Ohio citizens and their family members. Compassionate care is needed and such mandates from the state as SB 83 represents squashes for students such training in and practice of compassionate care for our most vulnerable citizens.

I urge you to consider my testimony and to not advance SB 83.

Respectfully submitted as a private citizen of Ohio,

Cynthia J. Osborn, PhD, LPCC-S, LICDC
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