

Thank you Chair Cirino, vice chair Rulli, ranking member Ingram, senator Reineke, and senator Reynolds for allowing me to provide testimony today against SB 83. My name is Rachel Careccia and I just graduated from the College of Social Work at OSU and I'm starting my Master's in Social Work in June. Chair Cirino you mentioned on the first day of proponent testimony that your staff members were fielding phone calls that featured abhorrent language and messaging, I would like to offer my sincere apologies for the actions of those individuals. Unfortunately, on both sides of the isle, we have extremists who cast negative light on us and can impede on progress actually being made. My goal with this testimony is to show you that there are future social workers, and other college students, who's learnings and careers can be negatively affected due to the passing of this bill.

As Social Workers, we are taught to listen to people, observe body language, consider culture, religion, and socioeconomic backgrounds when helping someone or a community. We are most importantly taught that everyone no matter what, deserves help. In my class schedule, we learned a lot about diversity, equity, and inclusion. We went over different cultures and how one simple gesture can shut a client down and impede you from creating a successful working relationship. We were taught about immigrants/refugees/ and asylum seekers and how best to help them transition in the United States of America, specifically in Columbus. In this time period, none of my professors ever imposed their political ideologies on me or my fellow classmates. We were encouraged to listen to everyone's viewpoints, be polite and considerate if we disagreed and sometimes, we did disagree, but it led to more knowledge on situations and opened our eyes to different aspects we may encounter in our careers and personal lives.

In the Social Work college, I have met many people with many different ideologies than my own, different political beliefs and religions than my own, and we were all able to coexist

and learn to the best of our abilities, the same goes for professors. I took a policy course and we had to pick a bill and dissect it to see the pros and cons of said bill and the impact it could have on that specific community it was taking aim at. During this time the Abortion Ban was just pushed in Texas, so I picked that. My professor encouraged me to take time to think of it from the republican's side and see why they could think it is a positive bill for some people. I am still pro-choice, but I am glad that he encouraged me to see it from someone else's point of view because that is a skill, I will need for my whole Social Work career.

I am deeply concerned that if this bill is passed professors like that, and many more in the Social Work college, will be impacted in a negative way because much of what we discuss is about diversity, equity, and inclusion. They may be apprehensive to push a scenario forward that could be deemed too DEI heavy and that will impede the learning process within our colleges. This will create a large learning gap for future Social Workers, or mental health providers, because we serve vulnerable populations who face DEI issues, and many other issues, daily.

Senators, we are living in a very polarizing time in this country, and it is very much one side against the other. This bill will not only silence people, create a big gap in professional careers, decrease the revenue that could be created in the state of Ohio from positive change within marginalized communities, but more importantly it will create a bigger divide. We may be the greatest nation, but we have a messy history, there is no denying that, and it's important to not hide the fact that DEI is needed because of our past wrong doings. There will be many people affected by this bill and it will primarily be people of color and people who pick careers that work directly with vulnerable populations. I sincerely hope my testimony has provided enough background to encourage you to reconsider this bill.

Thank you for your time, I am open to any questions at this time.