

Testimony Against House Bill 83 in Ohio

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 83 in its current form. While some changes have been made to the bill, they fail to address the fundamental concerns this legislation poses for higher education institutions in Ohio. The revisions made to the bill do not rectify its detrimental impact on academic freedom, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts and the overall well-being of faculty, staff, and students.

Despite the amendments, several problematic provisions remain unchanged. The bill's insistence on disciplining faculty and staff for interference with "intellectual diversity rights" is deeply concerning. The lack of clarity on the accusation process and the absence of defined procedures for those accused further undermine the principles of due process and academic freedom. The bill's language still perpetuates the notion that faculty should not seek to "inculcate" students, undermining education's fundamental purpose and stifling open dialogue and critical thinking.

Furthermore, the ban on required diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts outside of limited exemptions is deeply troubling. Higher education institutions are responsible for cultivating inclusive and diverse learning environments that prepare students for an interconnected world. By restricting the implementation of DEI initiatives, the bill hampers the ability of institutions to foster understanding, respect, and equality among students and faculty.

The bill's syllabi requirements, including the public disclosure of syllabi, and the emphasis on student evaluations as the primary measure of teaching assessment, fail to capture the complexity of effective teaching and learning. Such narrow metrics can lead to an overreliance on subjective evaluations and neglect other crucial aspects of faculty performance andragogical and pedagogical excellence.

Additionally, the provisions that limit collective bargaining rights and reduce trustee terms raise concerns about shared governance and institutional stability. The bill's impact on tenure, retrenchment, and faculty workload undermines the vital role of faculty in shaping academic programs and policies. Academic freedom and the protections afforded by tenure are essential to fostering intellectual curiosity and maintaining the highest standards of education.

Moreover, the unfunded reporting mandates included in the bill impose unnecessary burdens on institutions already facing resource constraints. These mandates divert valuable time, energy, and financial resources away from the core mission of providing quality education to students.

In conclusion, House Bill 83, even with the recent revisions, threatens the autonomy, diversity, and quality of higher education in Ohio. It undermines academic freedom, stifles inclusive dialogue, and burdens institutions with unfunded mandates. Please reconsider the passage of this bill and instead focus on supporting policies that enhance the educational experience, promote diversity and inclusion, and protect the principles that underpin higher education.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Kei Graves, Ph.D.

Concerned Citizen and Educator