

Written Testimony of Dr. Linda Marie Rouillard
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
November 29, 2023

Chair Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Miller, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Rouillard, and I am Chair of the Ohio Faculty Council whose members are representatives of Faculty Senates from Ohio universities and colleges. We are not submitting testimony in the name of our academic institutions, but rather we are submitting opponent testimony as the Ohio Faculty Council.

The Ohio Faculty Council supports some of the changes recently made to SB83, such as the elimination of the no-strike provision, the removal of the blacklisted topics, and the change to allow institutions to develop their own civics course. Such changes demonstrate a respect for worker rights and faculty expertise in curricular development.

However, the Ohio Faculty Council opposes several other features of SB83 under current consideration by the House Higher Education Committee. There remains an attack on free speech in this bill, along with a back door threat to tenure which will lead to a brain drain in Ohio, driving faculty, students, and businesses alike from our state. We have seen the negative effects of such initiatives in other states, such as Wisconsin, Texas, and Florida.

The prohibition on collective bargaining on the issues of retrenchment, tenure, and evaluation will certainly not enhance higher education in Ohio. Instead, it will leave students vulnerable to frequent faculty turn-overs and staffing shortages, at a high cost to employers as well. Our school and university programs flourish with teachers who are part of the community, rather than being transient workers. Furthermore, lack of stable, dedicated educator staffing will lead to decreased course availability, program disruptions, delays to graduation, and disconnections with workforce needs.

Contrary to public opinion, tenure is not a job for life. Rather it is a promise of due process, especially in areas related to discipline and termination. It encourages dedication to one's institution, profession, and students, and it discourages staffing interruptions and shortages.

The current version of SB83 still contains vague language regarding intellectual diversity and perceptions of violations of intellectual diversity, along with the required disciplinary action. Such ambiguity leaves everyone vulnerable to frivolous charges that mistake differences of opinion with an absence of intellectual diversity.

The Ohio Faculty Council urges you to vote against this latest version of SB83.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony. I conclude with the last part of the Faculty Congress of Ohio resolution from September 22, 2023: • Be it further resolved that the Faculty Congress of Ohio strongly opposes legislative actions designed to micromanage our campuses and classrooms, and further commits to working with the relevant committees in the Ohio House and Ohio Senate to continue to ensure the best educational opportunities for all of our students.