



**Ohio Environmental Council**  
[Action Fund]

December 6, 2023

To: Members of the Ohio House of Representatives  
From: Pete Bucher, Chief of Staff, Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund  
Re: Senate Bill 83

Dear Honorable Representatives,

I am writing to inform you that the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) Action Fund will be scoring Senate Bill 83 for the purposes of our Legislative Scorecard for the 135th Ohio General Assembly. **We urge a no vote on Senate Bill 83.** To the extent that SB 83 passes, the OEC Action Fund will be doing extensive public education on the content and the votes on this legislation due to its negative impact on Ohio's higher education.

Senate Bill 83 impacts Ohio's 14 public universities, 23 public community colleges, and a few private institutions. It would limit the institution's ability to take a stance on a "controversial belief or policy," meaning any belief or policy determined to be "subject of political controversy." In this determination, the legislative text notes that this includes electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, abortion, immigration policy, marriage, **and climate change**. Furthermore, Senate Bill 83 would restrict training, professional development, or hiring to learn about these aforementioned topics.

The OEC Action Fund finds that the passage of Senate Bill 83 would be incredibly harmful to higher education across the state. Students, professors, and staff are affected most directly by this stark overhaul in education policy in Ohio. Under this legislation, institutions are forced to encourage students, faculty, and staff to reach their own conclusions on "controversial matters" while chilling programs around the facts, discussion, or spaces designed to cultivate critical thinking and learning. The legislation greatly limits academic freedom of both students and professors, and, in turn, hurts the opportunity for collective learning on social injustices we see today in our state and across the country.

Senate Bill 83 would also eliminate a public college or university's ability to create climate action plans and implement sustainability goals. Lines 229 -236 detail that institutions of higher education and their boards cannot "endorse, oppose, comment, or take action, as an institution, on the public policy controversies of the day, or any other ideology, principle, concept, or formulation that requires commitment to any controversial belief or policy, specified concept, or specified ideology." As written, this could prevent major institutions from taking action on sustainability or climate that saves universities money while improving public health and air quality. Climate action plans are important to outlining long-term steps toward decarbonization and comprehensively eliminating greenhouse gas emissions, while supporting communities along the way. Eliminating these emissions at institutions is just another way Ohio can continue to reduce its greenhouse gas footprint as one of the country's top polluters.



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The OEC Action Fund sees Senate Bill 83 as a threat to developing equitable solutions to climate change that confront environmental racism and protect the health and safety of all who call Ohio home. Whether it is about climate change or other issues named as “controversial beliefs or policies,” we should encourage thoughtful, critical discussion on campuses rather than discouraging it. **We urge you to vote “no” on Senate Bill 83.**

If you have any questions, please email me at [pbucher@theoec.org](mailto:pbucher@theoec.org).

Sincerely,

Pete Bucher  
Chief of Staff  
OEC Action Fund