



April 18, 2023

The Honorable Terry Johnson, Chair  
Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
1 Capitol Sq.  
Senate Building, FI 2  
Columbus, OH 43215-0170

RE: SB 83

Dear Chairman Johnson and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, I write to oppose Senate Bill 83, which would prohibit state institutions of higher education from requiring diversity-equity-inclusion (DEI) ideologies, mandatory programs, or training courses for applicants, students, or faculty.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is the national professional, scientific, and credentialing association for 228,000 members and affiliates who are audiologists; speech-language pathologists; speech, language, and hearing scientists; audiology and speech-language pathology support personnel; and students. Audiologists specialize in preventing and assessing hearing and balance disorders as well as providing audiologic treatment, including hearing aids. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) identify, assess, and treat speech, language, swallowing, and cognitive-communication disorders. Over 7,700 ASHA members reside in Ohio.<sup>1</sup>

ASHA opposes SB 83 because it significantly limits the ability for audiology and speech-language pathology programs to appropriately educate and train students for a diverse population of clients, patients, and students. Providing person- and family-centered, culturally relevant care is key to achieving optimal outcomes in the most efficient and cost-effective manner. Future health and education professionals must be educated to address the social, economic, and environmental factors that influence health including at the individual, system, and population levels.

ASHA believes that representation matters, that culturally responsive care is a clinical imperative, and that quality service and optimal outcomes are best achieved by professionals who engage in self-reflection and address power imbalances inherent to (a) educational and health care systems and (b) relationships with clients, patients, students, and families. The restrictions placed by this bill lessen the value of these professional qualities and limits access for professionals assessing and treating communication disorders.

ASHA maintains the critical need for development of syllabi and instructional activities with infusion of multicultural/multilingual issues at higher education institutions to prepare professionals to work with a diverse population of individuals who have communication disorders. It is the responsibility of higher education to prepare students for working with all populations, including aspects of bias, identity, language, and diversity. As such, faculty

must be empowered to impart knowledge about evidence-based health and health care treatment that is person- and population specific without overburdening faculty with prior disclosure and approval of **all classroom discussions** (i.e., Sec. 3345.029. (d) A general description of the subject matter of each lecture or discussion in the course). In addition, ASHA requests clarification on Sec. 3345.029 (e) Biographical information on the course instructor as to the type and extent of biographical information that is expected of faculty to provide.

Thank you for your consideration of ASHA's position of SB 83. If you or your staff have any questions, please contact Doanne Ward-Williams, ASHA's director of state affairs, at [dwardwilliams@asha.org](mailto:dwardwilliams@asha.org).

Sincerely,



Robert M. Augustine, PhD, CCC-SLP  
2023 ASHA President

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<sup>1</sup> American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2022). *Ohio* [Quick Facts].  
<https://www.asha.org/siteassets/advocacy/state-fliers/ohio-state-flyer.pdf>