

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Eric Cox, I am a rising Sophomore at Bowling Green State University studying Political Science and Communication. I have been involved in politics since my Freshman year of high school at Gahanna Lincoln here in Columbus. I am here today in support of what I believe is one of the most important bills in the Ohio legislature. Living in a country as good as ours it is very easy to take our most cherished rights for granted. One of these that has unfortunately come under attack in recent years is Free Speech. President Reagan famously said, "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction." This is a real truth for many political activists on college campuses in our state and across our nation today. Through my involvement with Turning Point USA, Young America's Foundation, Young American's for Liberty, amongst other groups I have met many student activists who have had their campus go after them for exercising their free speech rights. This is unacceptable and must end. Public Universities are meant to be open spaces for discourse and dialog. University administrators have attempted to take that away in recent years, through uninviting so called "controversial" speakers, to denying chapters of various organizations and limiting students' rights to showcase their organizations to "free speech zones", the idea that students can only express themselves in limited areas on campus is horrendous. These schools have taken upon themselves to determine how students should express themselves, and what they should be exposed to, and what they should be kept away from. This is fundamentally wrong; I did not apply to college to be kept a perfect little echo chamber designed by my school's administration to come out believing what they want me to believe. I went to be challenged; I went to be exposed to the world. Some will say this bill is not needed, that

the constitution already has the first amendment, why do we need it? Ask a conservative political activist on a liberal college campus, and you will quickly learn the truth of what is being done to suppress differing views. A friend of mine, Stormi Rodriguez faced this problem head on at her school in Texas, where the Universities student senate attempted to pass a bill to ban their chapter of Turning Point USA from campus. I could spend hours sharing similar stories of students right to expression coming under attack from their University's so called "rules". Thankfully, Stormi and Turning Point USA fought back and kept their chapter. Students should not have to fight back against their Universities to get the rights granted to them in the Constitution, their freedoms should not be determined by some unelected college administrator. This should not be a partisan issue, while I am here as a student heavily involved in right leaning activism, Free Speech must be for all. You can pass this bill and send a message to Universities across this country. Just because we are students, it should not mean our Freedoms are able to be taken away on publicly funded campuses at the whim of the administration. Our freedoms are nonnegotiable. I strongly urge you to vote yes, thank you for your time.