

## David Randall, NAS Testimony, Ohio HB 151

My name is David Randall and I am the Director of Research of the National Association of Scholars. NAS is a network of scholars and citizens united by our commitment to academic freedom, disinterested scholarship, and excellence in higher education. We have more than thirty-five years of experience in advocating for the principles of intellectual freedom.

The National Association of Scholars enthusiastically endorses House Bill 151, the Enact Ohio Higher Education Enhancement Act. HB 151 will do an extraordinary amount to depoliticize Ohio's public higher education system, strengthen its academic freedom, freedom of speech, and diversity of opinion, and restore its accountability to Ohio citizens. We hope that it will swiftly become law.

HB 151 offers wonderfully comprehensive improvement of Ohio's higher education. Its catalogue of reforms includes requirements that colleges and universities receiving state funds commit themselves to free speech and intellectual diversity, and to prohibit both "diversity statements" and the imposition by **required** courses or training of "diversity, equity, and inclusion." HB 151 prohibits "ideological litmus tests in hiring and promotion" in state institutions of higher education." HB 151 also adds requirements to reform mission statements, make college syllabi accessible to the public, and bring the details of college budgets into the light. The bill also requires that Ohio's public universities annually report how well they have fulfilled these requirements and stipulates that universities institute sanctions for noncompliance. The NAS supports each of these reforms as excellent and necessary means to restore intellectual freedom to Ohio's colleges.

Rather than focus on the details of the bill, I would like to speak more generally on two topics. **Why is HB 151 necessary to preserve academic freedom? And why must Ohio's policymakers act to preserve freedom on campus?**

HB 151 is necessary because most higher education administrators and professors have abandoned the principles and the practice of intellectual and academic freedom. My colleague John Sailer has written extensively about how so-called "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" bureaucrats at Ohio State University have used diversity statements and other administrative means to prevent all dissenters from radical orthodoxy from getting hired. They rig their rules to suppress all internal dissent, use their monopoly powers to ensure they will face no intellectual competition, claim "freedom" from any external intervention against their tyranny, and echo the Soviets who denounced American human rights initiatives as "tantamount to interference in our internal affairs." Their "expertise," "autonomy," and "shared governance" have become fig leaves for subordinating intellectual freedom to the pursuit of radical political goals.

Policymakers should remember that the citizens of Ohio, their elected representatives, and their appointed trustees, always have shared with university administrators and faculty the right and the responsibility to defend academic and intellectual freedom. If the administrators who control institutions of higher education will not act to defend their members' individual academic freedom, then public and its representatives must exercise directly the powers and duties they always have possessed. The administrators and faculty who run Ohio's universities have broken their covenant. Ohio's elected representatives possess both the right and the duty to renovate the ivory tower.

Ohio's policymakers can only fulfill their covenant with the citizens they represent by exercising their right to oversee Ohio's universities and restoring their academic freedom, freedom of speech, and diversity of opinion. HB 151 is a necessary and well-tailored means to that end.

The National Association of Scholars heartily endorses HB 151, and we urge Ohio's legislators to pass this bill and Governor DeWine to sign it.