

Contact Information:

Phone: 614.644.6014
Email: Rep97@OhioHouse.gov



Committees:

Aviation and Aerospace (Chair)
JMOC (Vice Chair)
Pensions
Public Health Policy
Public Utilities
Technology and Innovation

State Representative Adam Holmes
97th House District of Ohio

Sponsor Testimony House Bill 394

Thank you, Chairman Young, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking member Miller, and members of the House Higher Education committee for hearing House Bill 394 today. America's unique strength lies in our shared support of fundamental human values. Some of our most deeply held beliefs include individual freedom, self-determination in pursuit of happiness, and equality under the law. In support of these values, the US and Ohio constitutions specifically protect the freedom of speech so integral to American liberty.

Additionally, Ohio's public higher education institutions serve a unique and priceless role in our society. Our universities bring talented students from diverse backgrounds together to learn about a literal universe of things. One of these educational opportunities includes the introduction to a range of perspectives. As one major national university chancellor recently stated, "Universities remain one of the last places in society where people with diverse viewpoints can engage in civil discourse, explore complex topics, and develop innovative solutions".

To remain consistent with these fundamental American values and higher education's purpose, Ohio's higher education institutions must be forums for open expression, new ideas and diverse opinions and experiences.

Unfortunately, Ohio's recent political climate has raised concerns that public higher education teachers, staff and students may face negative consequences for expressing certain political perspectives or failing to conform to specific ideological viewpoints. More directly, concern is growing that employment, funding, promotion, certifications, and classroom evaluations in Ohio's public higher education institutions are increasingly tied to demonstrated support for specific ideologies and political opinions.

HB 394 is intended to promote freedom from obligatory political action or belief inside our public higher education institutions in order to uphold the fundamental American concepts of freedom of speech and self-determination and to ensure Ohio's public universities and colleges successfully accomplish their stated mission.

This bill will support the following actions:

- Ensuring public higher education institutions shall not require employees, students, or job applicants to

Contact Information:

Phone: 614.644.6014
Email: Rep97@OhioHouse.gov



Committees:

Aviation and Aerospace (Chair)
JMOC (Vice Chair)
Pensions
Public Health Policy
Public Utilities
Technology and Innovation

State Representative Adam Holmes

97th House District of Ohio

support any specific ideologies or political movements.

- Ensuring these institutions shall not use support statements for specific ideologies or political movements as evaluation criteria for employees, students, or job applicants.
- Providing specific protection for general discussion of political movements, ideologies, and social action inside the classroom.
- Providing specific protection for free speech rights for public higher education employees, students and job applicants.
- Directing public access to all higher education policy and instructional materials concerning political movements, ideology, or social action.

Our public higher education institutions are certainly places of learning, but they are also critical community centers and one of the few places in our current society where Ohio citizens of all backgrounds gather and work cooperatively to create community spirit and shared culture. A robust commitment to the free exchange of ideas and expression of differing viewpoints is not only critical for a successful learning environment, but also consistent with American values of free speech and individual value.

Support of this bill will help us all ensure our public higher education institutions remain protected speech environments where together we can build stronger students, stronger communities, and a stronger Ohio.

References:

1967 Kalven Principles from the University of Chicago
1974/1999 Stanford Academic Freedom Declaration
2022 Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Statement on Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom
2023-2024 Carolina Commitment to Academic Freedom and Free Expression
2022-2024 Public statements from leadership at Vanderbilt and Hillsdale College.
2024 Mission Statements of Ohio University, Bowling Green State University, and the Ohio State University