

Opponent Testimony of Fabio Polanco, M.F.A.

Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Representative Tom Young, Chair
March 4, 2025

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee

My name is Fabio Polanco, and I am a professor at Kent State University. Before that, I taught at Ashland University where I received the Taylor Excellence in Teaching Award and a commendation from the Ohio State Senate for my instruction and dedication to students. I am also a father of two. I am deeply invested in and concerned about education in our state. I do not represent Kent State University; rather, I am submitting testimony as a private citizen opposing Senate Bill 1.

There are many issues with SB1. It is a threat to collective bargaining. This is not just a threat to faculty but sets a dangerous precedent for all organized labor in Ohio. This bill disempowers labor by eliminating the right to strike and to negotiate important terms of employment including performance reviews, tenure, and retrenchment.

This bill claims to support free speech, but, in truth, it restricts any speech not aligned with the views of its proponents. It is antithetical to our nation's foundational values. Faculty are content experts and students pay to receive and explore the fullness of that content. They do not pay to hear a censored version that will leave them ill-prepared to succeed in their disciplines.

This bill communicates to many that they are not welcome in our state and at our universities, and it hampers the ability of institutions of higher learning to support their students in the complex and varied ways they need support. As a result, we will lose them and their tuition dollars. We will also lose them as potential lifelong contributors to our state's economy.

There is no crisis in public higher education in Ohio. This bill harms students, harms higher education, harms labor, and harms Ohio. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this unnecessary and harmful bill.