

We write to express our strong opposition to Senate Bill 1. This bill, just like Senate Bill 83, is a threat to every noble principle that the historical profession stands for, including the freedom to read, discuss, and debate new ideas and multiple perspectives on the past. Historians teach students, among other things, how to think critically about complex issues and discuss them in writing and in conversation in a classroom setting.

Senate Bill 1 would make that impossible. This bill will endanger rather than protect the free exchange of ideas in the classroom, creating conditions in which both professor and the students may be reluctant to speak openly. The bill assumes the worst motives on the part of the faculty, and it describes a crisis that does not exist. Moreover, the bill ignores the professional standards that scholars must meet before they even enter the classroom; their deep sense of obligation to their students; and their dedication to the pursuit of historical knowledge.

This measure will have an impact far beyond history, as important as that is. If it becomes law, it will undermine the state's ability to recruit top-rank faculty and students in all fields. It will destroy the reputation of our colleges and universities, replacing serious academic standards with a narrow range of acceptable topics chosen by government officials. In a mature democracy like the United States, we should not fear the free and open exchange of ideas regardless of the venue.

We call upon the historical profession, the academic community, and the people of Ohio to defend academic freedom and oppose SB 1.

Professor Daniel Rivers, Ohio State University, President of the Ohio Academy of History, on behalf of the Executive Committee:

Professor Janet R. Bednarek, University of Dayton
Professor Joan E. Cashin, Ohio State University
Doctor Don Eberle, Napoleon Area City Schools
Professor Arvind Elangovan, Wright State University
Professor Ann Heiss, Kent State University
Professor Bradley Keefer, Kent State University-Ashtabula
Professor Julie Mujic, Denison University
Professor Martha Pallante, Youngstown State University
Professor David Strittmatter, Ohio Northern University

The Ohio Academy of History boasts a membership that reaches across numerous arenas, from college faculty to high school social studies teachers to museum professionals and independent scholars.