

Testimony of Krista Sigler, PhD

Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Dr. Krista Sigler and I am a professor of history at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College, where I have been a full-time faculty member for 16 years. I do not represent the University of Cincinnati but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

I am writing because this legislation will actively hurt Ohioans:

--It requires a course that could cause millions in cost to the Ohio taxpayer, as we will need to hire sufficient faculty to teach a civics course to every undergraduate. I'm estimating the staffing needs for my small college alone to be near \$150,000 in additional costs—and that's if we do everything possible within our existing curriculum to maximize our current resources. (That number does not include the other colleges within my university, who would face similar costs. We as a whole university could easily end up having an extra expense of \$500,000 or more, just for this course.) We just do not have the amount of faculty necessary to teach every single undergraduate this course as required by the legislation, and therefore we would have to hire.

Please know that every single college and university across Ohio is going to be facing precisely the same scenario—and think about the costs we're going to face. Who is paying the millions for this ultimately? Ohioans—either through the state or through tuition costs passed on to the students. Is this really what we want? Aren't we supposed to be watching out for wasteful additional spending?

--It requires, because of bureaucratic mandates, additional manpower time and server space for certain actions (like presenting syllabi publicly) that takes away from the funding of Ohio higher education. The people of Ohio already give money to the universities through their taxes and, for students, tuition. We do not need them to absorb unnecessary costs, in effect making the public pay for mandates that are pointless.

--It has confusing and contradictory language about content that would impede a full education. For example, marriage is defined as a "controversial topic." Does this mean I cannot teach about Henry VIII? It states as well that "climate" is a

forbidden controversial topic. Does that mean our Environmental Science degrees--degrees which are definitely in-demand with industry--are now prohibited? Are we really talking about shutting down programs that are actively training students for new, in-demand jobs? Don't we want Ohio students to be sought-after for industry work?

--It mandates positions and language that are unnecessary because they already exist. For example, the legislation refers to what happens if a faculty member is inappropriately injecting their personal politics in class. We don't need a bill on this topic because in every university in which I have ever taught there is already a way for students to alert administrators to this and for a disciplinary process to begin. I know, because as a department chair part of my job is to speak with faculty who have been said to be inappropriately political in classrooms. (The two times this has happened, for the record, involved faculty of *both* major political affiliations. Our professional expectations apply to all professors.)

--It requires post-tenure review in a way that would be imposed on all universities regardless of the nature of the faculty member's job. For example, it asks about research productivity. Not all of us are research faculty, for example--some of us are predominantly educators. Why are we being lumped together in this review? This is akin to dictating a review process for every state politician and judging them by their impact on federal politics—it would make no sense, because that's not their role. And yet that is exactly what SB1 would now do to professors.

--This legislation creates a hostile, micromanaging atmosphere that will discourage talented educators from coming to Ohio. I'm already seeing this in the amount of job applicants we've received at my university for two positions advertised nationally. A similar position received 88 applications not many years ago. Now, with many more PhDs in my field desperately looking for work, we're struggling to hit 20. The reason? People are afraid to come to Ohio for fear of being trapped in a politicized, micromanaged educational environment. And because those talented individuals do not want to come to Ohio, our students' education will suffer from lost opportunities to learn from the best in their fields.

I know you care about Ohioans and their future. Please do not impose poorly informed micromanagement on our universities, causing untold extra, unnecessary expenses to the people of Ohio, and driving away employers and great educators alike. Our students, our future, deserve better.

I thank you respectfully for your time and service to our state,
Krista Sigler