

Testimony of: **Kay Bea Jones, Professor Emerita**

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 Kay Bea Jones, and I am an emeritus professor from the College of Engineering at Ohio State University, where I have taught for thirty-eight years. I was honored to complete my teaching career as a recipient of the prestigious President and Provost Award for Distinguished Faculty Service in 2023. I do not represent OSU, my College, or my School, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

SB1 as proposed by Senator Cirino is a costly form of government overreach into one of Ohio's most vibrant, renowned, and historic institutions in our state. The deficits and problems aimed to be addressed by this bill are not substantiated in fact or familiar in my experience. One wishes that the members of our state legislature would come to campus; attend labs, workshops, studios, seminars, and classes; and participate in the dialogues that have for generations developed creative, well-informed, critical thinkers and citizens.

I will leave it to others to specify the detrimental policies of this bill. Changes to the University protocols for faculty hiring and review, administrative offices, curricula, and terminology are not likely to improve on the institutions of higher education in our state. OSU's patterns of administration and educational excellence have grown through collaborative input from faculty, staff, and students over the evolution of the university and are measured against our peer institutions. We continue to be one of the great universities in our country.

Instead, my comments focus on two primary concerns: the great history of The Ohio State University now in jeopardy and the damage SB1 will have on our fiscal well-being and reputation.

Over 150+ years, our flagship land grant university has earned a reputation due to its top research and teaching faculty, competitive student enrollment since the years of President Ed Jennings, notable research accomplishments, and technology innovations. We have alumni in all 50 states and throughout the world. The institution and personnel we are today is the result of its historic evolution through world wars, scientific discoveries, Vietnam, civil rights, famous alumni as well as a well-educated workforce in the state, and a few national championships. We are an intellectually and culturally diverse organization that has had enormous impact in shaping the best of our society. Recent acts of shuttering our Office of Diversity and Inclusion without due process, altering our criteria for reviewing faculty for promotion, and eliminating offices and staff that serve our student body is in effect erasing our history; the history that led us to our present distinction. The alumni I have heard from are not happy about it.

My second concern is for the fiscal health and academic reputation of Ohio State. The passage of SB1 will have devastating consequences for the composition of our students and faculty, and therefore of our reputation as a place of higher learning, research, and academic freedom. Universities are dynamic environments with competitive, itinerant faculty and new incoming classes of students each year. SB1 will have the effect of limiting our ability to attract the best international and out of state students. Current faculty will migrate to those institutions where they have academic freedom, and the hiring of top new faculty will be hindered. Both losses will have negative financial effects on The Ohio State University and other public universities in the state. If alumni that care about our institutional values disagree with these moves, the financial losses may be disastrous.

I urge you to vote against SB1 in recognition of the probable adverse effects on our reputation, finances, and communities at Ohio State and other public universities. With passage, the only part of our proud history that will remain intact are on banners in the stadiums and arenas.