

Testimony of Shelly Malberti, DNP, RN  
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee  
Rep. Tom Young, Chair  
March 08, 2025

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

My name is Dr. Shelly Malberti, and I am a professor of nursing at Cuyahoga Community College, where I have taught for eleven years. I do not represent Tri-C, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen. I am submitting this testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 1 (SB 1). This bill is not about improving higher education—it is a politically motivated attack that threatens academic freedom, weakens workforce development, and puts ideology ahead of evidence-based education.

**SB 1's Attack on Healthcare Education:** DEI is Inseparable from Nursing and Medicine  
As a healthcare educator, I find the demand to eliminate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) from the curriculum both impossible and dangerous. DEI is not a political agenda—it is the foundation of competent, ethical, and patient-centered care.

There is no evidence-based practice, no textbook, and no clinical guideline that excludes DEI. Every major accrediting body, including the American Nurses Association, the Joint Commission, and the American Medical Association, recognizes the importance of teaching students about health disparities, social determinants of health, and cultural competence. If this bill passes, how will Ohio train future healthcare professionals? Will we pretend that disparities in maternal mortality, chronic disease, or access to care do not exist? Ignoring DEI in education will not erase these disparities—it will only worsen them.

**Misrepresentation of Faculty Strikes: The Facts Matter**

One of the justifications for SB 1 is the claim that faculty strikes disrupt education. This argument is misleading at best. The last faculty strike in Ohio occurred in 2019 at Wright State University, after two years of failed contract negotiations. Faculty do not strike to harm students—they strike when administrations refuse to engage in fair bargaining. These events are rare, and when they do occur, they are a symptom of poor administrative decision-making, not faculty irresponsibility.

**Silencing the Public and Weakening Higher Education**

The decision to limit public testimony on SB 1 to just three hours is a clear indication that lawmakers do not want to hear from the people who will be most affected. If this bill is truly beneficial for Ohio's higher education system, why is opposition being suppressed? A strong democracy does not silence its educators and students—it listens to them.

**Conclusion: SB 1 Will Harm Ohio's Students and Workforce**

If SB 1 passes, Ohio will face faculty shortages, declining enrollment, and a weakened workforce pipeline. Talented educators and students will leave the state, and Ohio will lose its ability to compete nationally in fields like nursing, medicine, engineering, and technology. Instead of imposing top-down political control over education, Ohio should be investing in evidence-based policies that strengthen higher education and workforce readiness.

I urge you to reject SB 1 and stand with the educators, students, and professionals who are working to keep Ohio's education system strong. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Shelly Malberti, DNP, RN