

Opposition testimony to SB1

I am a retired professor from the Ohio State University where I had the great privilege of guiding students through their academic careers for 27 years. I am writing this **statement in opposition to SB1**, a destructive bill that will muzzle free speech. It will control topics that professors and instructors can address in the classroom, it will ban faculty strikes, and it will not allow students their rights to free speech. SB1 constricts free speech; it does not give equal rights to every person as it purports to do.

On the “controversial” topics that cannot be addressed: please know that our students are preparing to enter the world as committed and fully engaged citizens of the world. I was very proud to know and teach and learn from them. These students bring to their classes the issues that concern them and about which they hope to engage with others whose views might differ from their own. Never in all my time teaching at OSU have I ever seen students’ points of view be stifled. In fact, I have seen students learn to participate in civil discourse and to seek to hear each others’ perspectives. I would invite members of the legislature to take a day and visit classes in progress so they could witness the kind of adult dialogue I am talking about. I am sure you too would be proud of the students who come from around the world and around the country to attend our Ohio institutions of higher education.

When there is behavior on campus which is disruptive, we must respond. Of course. But these too are learning experiences. We must remember that these students are learning—always learning. Stifling them in this process will not facilitate the growth and the curiosity and creativity we hope to see in these young people.

Ohio promises to be a site of great technological innovation. This bill will result in the loss of top notch students and faculty. We will lose the finest, brightest young minds to other states if we do not help our young people succeed. This bill will make Ohio poorer in innovation and will gut our local economies. Restaurants, bars, shops, and arts organizations will lose out and too many small businesses will be forced to close. The bill does not promote Ohio’s future—it promises to destroy it.