

Testimony of Joseph Baumgartner, 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 Joseph Baumgartner, and I am an Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash College, where I have taught for seven years. I do not represent UC Blue Ash but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen against SB1 and its companion HB6.

SB1 claims to “advance” Ohio’s higher education, but all it really does is advance partisan micromanaging of academic communities. The bill is full of contradictions and vague language that creates a culture of fear among higher education institutions. At the center of this is a contradiction between “intellectual diversity” and viewpoints compelled by the bill. The bills define intellectual diversity as “multiple, divergent, and varied perspectives on an extensive range of public policy issues (Sec. 3345.0217 (A) (1)).” And yet, just a few lines later, the bill bans all efforts relating to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). It is patently ridiculous to purport to promote varied perspectives only to ban programming for the benefit of wide swaths of the student population.

For all its contradictions and fuzzy language, there is one thing that SB1/HB6 makes perfectly clear: this bill weakens Ohio’s academic workforce by micromanaging faculty and slashing workers’ rights. Unfunded mandates such as a post-tenure review and the syllabus database add nothing of value to the student experience while exposing instructors to bad-faith actors. Provisions that forbid striking and bargaining for fundamental aspects of academic freedom are an assault on the working class. Faculty working conditions determine the student learning environment. The changes in SB1 make that environment less appealing to students and makes Ohio’s higher education less competitive. That means less money for the state and less opportunity for its citizens.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this ill-conceived and destructive bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

-Joseph Baumgartner