

Testimony of Dominic D. Wells, Ph.D.
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 Dominic Wells and I am an associate professor of political science at Bowling Green State University. I am also the director of the Fire Administration program. I do not represent Bowling Green State University but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

First, I would like to address the labor union related changes in the bill. SB1 prohibits collective bargaining for the subjects of workload, evaluations, tenure, and retrenchment. It also prohibits faculty from striking. We collectively bargain contracts at Bowling Green State University. Our process of collective bargaining is effective. We have a good working relationship with administration and collective bargaining helps us solve problems together. Eliminating the right to strike and limiting the scope of bargaining would greatly shift the balance of power and make this strong working relationship less effective. Further this is a solution for a problem that does not exist. Strikes are very rare in the university system.

Second, the changes regarding post-tenure review are unnecessary. There is a misconception in the public that professors are not evaluated enough, especially after they earn tenure. The public does not fully understand, and I suspect neither do many in the legislature, how much professors are evaluated. As an assistant professor on the tenure track, I was evaluated by the students, my colleagues, the chair of the department, a college-level committee, and the Dean of the college annually. Students submitted evaluations of all of my classes and these evaluations were included in my annual evaluations and merit evaluations. Each year I went through Annual Performance Review, where a committee of my colleagues in the department, the chair, a college-level committee, and the Dean of the college all evaluated my work. In the third year of an appointment, we have Enhanced Performance Review. This review goes through the same process as Annual Performance Review, but looks at my accomplishments in my first three years. Each year there is also a merit review process where a committee and the chair evaluate my work to determine if I've earned a merit-based raise. Of course there is then the tenure and promotion review at the end of the 6-year probationary period. I met or exceeded expectations in that review of my work, earned tenure, and was promoted to associate professor. If I did not earn that promotion and tenure, my appointment at the university would have been terminated.

Following tenure, there continue to be evaluations. Students continue to evaluate professors and those evaluations are included as part of merit evaluations. Tenured faculty go through merit evaluations every year to determine if they earn the merit raise. If faculty do not meet

expectations in teaching, research, and service, there is an extraordinary review process where several levels of the university evaluate the work of the faculty member. It is a myth that tenured professors have jobs for life. Tenured professors can lose their jobs for poor performance or in situations of financial exigency. The post-tenure review process in SB 1 is an unnecessary requirement.

Third, I'd like to address the intellectual diversity and civic literacy requirements. There are conflicting ideas in SB1. On one hand, any belief or policy can be considered controversial and the faculty are required to allow students to reach their own conclusions. On the other hand, all students will be required to take an American civic literacy course that teaches them the American economic system and capitalism. Are the sponsors of the bill aware that if we teach students about capitalism by their intellectual diversity standards then they may come to the conclusion that they don't like capitalism? Would it be acceptable for students to reach that conclusion in an intellectually diverse classroom or would they simply conclude that the students were brainwashed by their professors? A recent Ohio Senate Republican newsletter (On the Record, 1/31/2025), accused the students protesting SB1 of having "indoctrinated minds of mush." Those do not sound like the words of legislators concerned about intellectual diversity and students reaching their own conclusions. Those are the words of legislators desperate to push their own ideologies on students through curriculum requirements. When I teach American government, I use a widely accepted textbook that covers many of the things in SB 1 without forcing an ideology on students. Accusations of bias are rare in our department and those complaints are often unsubstantiated. The curriculum requirements in SB 1 are unnecessary.

Fourth, there are a lot of requirements that are going to create unnecessary bureaucracy and allow people to target professors. The requirement to post all syllabi publicly with searchable keywords and phrases makes it easier for people to find professors who are teaching topics they disapprove of and could potentially cause harm to those professors. Further, requirements like these create an unnecessary administrative burden on universities. Adding more bureaucracy will not improve higher education in Ohio.

There are a lot of problems with SB 1 and I have not addressed all of them here. I teach political science and public administration, including courses in public personnel management and labor relations. Requiring administrators to do additional reviews of faculty, adding to the administrative burden of universities, and limiting the ability of administration and faculty to solve problems together through collective bargaining will not improve our already outstanding state universities.