

Testimony of Erin Allen, 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 Erin Allen, and I am a lecturer in the School of Music at Ohio State University where I have taught as both a graduate teaching assistant and as a lecturer. Furthermore, I earned my doctorate from Ohio State as well. I do not represent Ohio State University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

This legislation assumes that there is no intellectual diversity in Ohio higher education, and that certain viewpoints are censored. This is patently untrue. There is a considerable amount of intellectual diversity at my institution. My students are from a wide range of backgrounds and have many different experiences and opinions. The courses and topics of study I teach are based in many years of study and research and I present them in such a way as to promote critical, open thinking and curiosity. The implied suggestion in this bill that faculty members silence or punish students with opposing viewpoints in classroom discussions and assignments is outrageous and patently untrue. University professors and instructors do not teach students what to think about so-called "controversial" topics. It is my aim as an instructor to help students think critically and be able to clearly and effectively communicate their own ideas and opinions, and use the knowledge they have gained in order to address problems and issues.

Second, this legislation assumes that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives are harmful to academic institutions. This idea is incorrect. DEI initiatives do not silence opposing voices or segregate communities. Our institution is full of diverse students, faculty, staff, and other community members. Diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives work to make sure that such diversity is supported in all its forms for all students, faculty, and staff.

As a recent PhD student at Ohio State University for example, I was able to complete my degree program with the social and financial support of a program that supports parenting students, located in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at Ohio State University. Without such an initiative, I would have had to quit my degree program after the birth of my son. Eliminating such DEI initiatives would have, in fact, segregated me from my academic community and silenced my academic voice – the opposite of this legislation's alleged goals.

This legislation's attempts to surveil teaching and learning at the University is absolutely inappropriate. Publicly publishing syllabi opens up faculty to undue criticism from non-specialist members of the public and invites harassment. Moreover, it quashes academic freedom. It is clear that this bill seeks to exert ideological and partisan control over institutions of higher education, and prevent experts in their fields from conducting their classrooms and curricula as they see fit. One portion of this bill requires investigations into complaints against those who supposedly violate the mandates in this bill, essentially setting up a system for students and the

public report on people who do not share their ideological beliefs. This is classic totalitarianism.

Finally, the provisions preventing collective bargaining by faculty is anti-union. Faculty deserve the right to advocate for their own working conditions, and are already subject to annual reviews and assessments.

This bill is extremely harmful. I urge you to consider my testimony and vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

Erin Allen, PhD