

Testimony of Mark Urban, Ohio born and Ohio educated educator
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:

I am Mark Urban, a career Ohio high school and college educator. I have worked full time in two Ohio high schools for a combined 24 years and 4 years as an Ohio community college adjunct professor. Teaching is my first vocation, though it is my second career. I worked in the grocery retail industry for over 13 years prior to choosing the vocation of teaching.

I am also the father of two Ohio born and raised children, one of whom is in college and another who will be deciding their post-high school path within the year. I am Ohio educated with three college degrees from three separate Ohio colleges and universities.

I am staunchly against Ohio SB1.

It is deeply unsettling to me that— among the many things that SB1 hopes to unsettle, diminish, and destroy— we are in a current legislative culture that wants to uproot the core tenet of education: to help students understand, collaborate with, grow with, and ultimately appreciate and love our fellow persons and, in this case, our fellow Ohioans.

The idea that colleges and universities— bastions of burgeoning growth, immersion, and applied learning— are somehow lesser or “indoctrinated” by policies of diversity, equity, and inclusion is utterly appalling to me. Ohio’s colleges and universities are and should be places where Ohioans meet the world and people and ideas *unlike* them. This is the natural progression of a healthy life: take your own ideologies, test them, unsettle them, and reshape them in perpetuity.

DEI programs, particularly in school settings, are essential tools in boosting all student voices and all students’ confidence and self-esteem. The people, programs, and experiences I learned from in my successful time at three Ohio colleges and universities from 1994 through 2012 were buoyed by policies and mindsets that were diversity, equity, and inclusion informed. I grew up in a deeply racist household that used religion as a “clobber” weapon— without DEI-mindedness, I cannot fathom the type of person, spouse, father, and educator that I would have become.

My oldest child is currently thriving in college— ***in Minnesota***. Though my oldest child was accepted into a number of Ohio colleges as an exceptional applicant from one of the best high schools in Ohio, they refused to attend any higher education institutions in Ohio due to past and current legislative actions that are radically non-inclusive and loaded with disingenuous persecution (anti-LGBTQ+ bills, religious-based initiatives, hostile tones toward educators, book-banning, etc.).

So Ohio lost an incredibly talented student due to its recidivist policies and my wife and I are not considering Ohio colleges and universities for our second child either due to this recidivism. We cannot maintain and recruit talent to this state with hostile attitudes toward education and educators.

I call on you to reject SB1 for the sake of Ohio, Ohioans, Ohio-born talent, and Ohio families that are finding it increasingly difficult to be proud of and stay Ohioan.

Peace,

Mark A. Urban