

Testimony of Erynn Beaton, 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 Erynn Beaton, and I am a professor of public affairs at The Ohio State University, where I have taught for over 7 years. I do not represent The Ohio State University today but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

SB1 has a lot of components, but they all have two things in common: 1) they are pulled from the Florida playbook, and 2) Ohio faculty don't want them, indeed even fear them. Like in Florida, SB1 will lead faculty to flee Ohio, having a substantial social and economic impact.

Over the past two years, I've been asked to speak on multiple academic panels discussing state attacks on higher education. One was titled "Navigating Censorship," another "The Floridian Legal-Cultural Code." In these panels, I sit alongside colleagues from Florida and other Southern states, listening to how state-level legislation is impacting their work. It's painful to listen as my colleagues make impossible decisions about whether to leave Florida to protect their tenure and academic freedom when that means uprooting their families and abandoning their students. Then, it's my turn to explain how Ohio is following suit.

I personally know several faculty who have left Southern states due to the legislative environment, and the data suggests this isn't merely anecdotal:

- The [Chronicle of Higher Education](#) reported that 9 of the 12 public universities in Florida experienced "significant spikes" in faculty resignations in 2022. For instance, at Florida State, 136 faculty resigned that year. Far higher than in previous years.
- [A survey of Florida faculty](#) showed that in 2023, almost half said they planned to seek employment in another state within the year. Even more said they wouldn't encourage another faculty member to seek employment in the state.
- While [Ohio State](#) has improved its rankings over this period, its closest Floridian competitor, the [University of Florida](#), and [other FL universities](#) have sunk.

Unfortunately, I have already had conversations with countless colleagues at OSU about what they will do if this bill passes. Some are already applying for jobs in other states. At OSU, we are accustomed to top-ranked job candidates wanting to come to the university. Now, we are losing top candidates when they learn about what the legislature has in store.

Faculty turnover will hurt students, and it will hurt Ohio. Ohio public universities contribute over [\\$68 billion](#) to the state economy each year. OSU alone contributes [\\$19 billion](#). Faculty extend the [tax base](#), make [communities safer](#), and [volunteer and donate](#) more.

Please vote against SB1 for the sake of the faculty, our students, and the entire state.