

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Luke Van Niel. I am a graduate student and instructor in the Department of English at The Ohio State University. I do not represent The Ohio State University or its Department of English but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

First and foremost, Senate Bill 1 will have lasting negative effects on Ohio's economy and labor force because of "brain drain," the act of faculty, staff, and graduates fleeing Ohio for states that are not actively cracking down on academic freedom (Sec. 3345.0216-8.), employees' ability to organize (Sec. 4117.14.), and the protections of tenure (Sec. 3345.453.). Moreover, prospective students will choose universities outside Ohio that are able to recruit top professors and that prioritize learning, not politics, in higher education. This is not a hypothetical—this is what happened in Wisconsin in 2015 after Governor Walker's attacks on the University of Wisconsin, and it is currently happening in Florida as a result of Governor DeSantis' interference in higher education ([Hiltzik, 2023](#)).

One of the many inconsistencies of SB 1 lies in its purported crackdown on fiscal waste in higher education (see Sec. 3345.454. on retrenchment and Sec. 3345.80.) even though it will create even more of the fiscal waste it attempts to eliminate. For example, the "American civic literacy" course mandated by Section 3345.382 B. requires students to reread documents like the Declaration and Constitution, which they literally grew up reading in the American educational system. Not only is this course's content unnecessarily redundant, but its implementation will also siphon taxpayer-funded resources and personnel away from other areas to merely replicate the purview of already existent departments and courses at Ohio State.

As a proud Ohioan and a current university employee and instructor, I am deeply concerned by Senate Bill 1. I always saw myself staying in Ohio as my family grows and my career progresses. But if Senate Bill 1 is codified into law, I will have no choice but to seek employment in a state that welcomes diversity and progress, not fights against it. I want to work in an inclusive environment where everybody's identity is valid and valued. Where I as an instructor do not have to fear for public attacks due to my dedication to fight for justice and social change within and beyond the classroom. Where the time, passion, and labor I put into my work are respected with the institution of tenure that is so crucial to academic rigor and freedom of expression. Where my Constitutional right to the freedom of speech—even speech with which my Ohio politicians disagree—is protected and upheld.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this extremist bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

I will now take any questions you may have.