

Testimony of Jeb Bugos in Opposition of SB1
Higher Education Committee
Representative Tom Young, Chair
9 Mar 2025

Chair Young, Vice-Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for listening to my testimony today. My name is Jeb Bugos and my pronouns are he/him and they/them. I am a college graduate who has been living in Ohio for 8 years. I attended Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), the highest ranked university in the state of Ohio, and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree. I now work at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, where I work in the department of Earth Sciences. I would like to note that this testimony represents my own personal opinions as a private citizen and not those of my employer. As a scientist and educator, I am deeply concerned about the potential for this bill to hurt students, faculty, and the integrity of our educational institutions. My specific concerns are regarding the limitations on the rights of faculty members, the limitations on DEI programs, and rules that limit classroom discussions on “controversial” subjects.

As a queer and transgender Ohioan, the DEI programming at my university made me feel safe. A major part of why I applied to and attended CWRU, and moved to Ohio, was because of the resources available to LGBTQ students. I was able to live in gender-inclusive housing, which made me feel safer in my home while I was pursuing my education. The LGBT center at CWRU was an invaluable resource for me and my fellow LGBTQ students to build community and get support. DEI programs have created actual tangible good for me and so many other students in Ohio. In addition to DEI efforts in school, I also found the freedom of speech in my classrooms to be essential for me to learn and develop critical thinking skills.

If passed, SB1 will serve to stifle important academic discussions in our educational institutions, decreasing the quality of students’ education and the academic integrity of our schools. If this legislation is passed, students will be incentivised to attend colleges and universities outside of Ohio, and our state will lose educated workers. Especially if DEI programs are eliminated, underrepresented or marginalized minority students like me will be encouraged to attend schools outside of Ohio, or not pursue higher education at all, decreasing the diversity of perspectives available to students at Ohio institutions and facilitating the “groupthink” that proponents of this bill claim they are trying to prevent. Additionally, Ohio's educational institutions would be seriously damaged by removing labor protections for faculty members by weakening the negotiating power of faculty unions, the stability of tenure, and the right to strike. In the highly competitive world of academia, professors will seek employment at schools in other states where they feel their jobs are safer and freedom of speech in their classrooms is protected.

I am testifying because I care about the education of the people in my state, and I share the alarm of the students and faculty who have spoken out against this legislation. This bill has been opposed by the vast majority of those who will be affected (students and educators)

who have shared their opinions about the content of this legislation. Those students and faculty are the experts in their own experience. Over 800 people testified against this bill in front of the Senate. Listen to them, and do not pass SB1.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Jeb Bugos
(He/they)