

Testimony of Dr. Theresa M. Culley  
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 Dr. Theresa Culley, and I am a professor of plant biology at the University of Cincinnati, where I have taught for over 22 years. I do not represent the University, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen. I am very much concerned with SB1 and its effect that it will have for our children and students in Ohio, as well as on scientific research within our state.

As a teacher within an Ohio institution of higher education, I have taught, mentored, and advised literally thousands of undergraduate and graduate students. I have been immensely proud of all the things that we have accomplished together, and the strong reputation that Ohio has gained as these students move on to successful careers throughout the world. We have made huge gains in the laboratory, as we work together to innovate and develop new treatments for diseases such as cancer, protect our natural resources, develop the next generation of crop plants for our farmers, and even create novel solutions to worldwide problems such as cybersecurity. If SB1 passes, all of this progress will fade away. Scientists such as myself will no longer want to stay in Ohio and our children will only lose out. My department has already lost star researchers attracted to other states, such as Michigan.

As a mother, I implore you to think about how SB1 will change the entire network of support for our children. Any child who receives additional help in school due to a learning disability or autism will lose that assistance – leaving them adrift once again. Veterans will lose all of their hard-earned academic support. I have also seen firsthand how often trans students are cast off by families, left to flounder without any help, often resorting to suicide when all else fails. If you are a Christian, please think about how Jesus embraced ALL people, regardless of their past, ethnicity, or job. What would Jesus do?

As a descendent of early settlers to Ohio after the Revolutionary War and also more recent immigrants to the northeastern steel mills, I ask that you consider the historical precedent you will set for our state. I do not want to be part of a state in which free speech is banned and hate is trumpeted. I've already seen the protest by Nazis in my community in Cincinnati, hanging their hate-filled banners on the bridge under which I drive to work. I choose to be part of a free society where diversity is treasured, and love is valued.

As you consider your own response to SB1 and how you might vote, I hope that you will think about integrity and what it means to do the right thing, regardless of how others might be moving in a different direction. Think about what is right for our state, for our residents and for our future generations. Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

