

Testimony of Amanda Keeton, M.Ed
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 write to you today as one of Ohio's proud but exhausted educators. I am currently an English teacher at Gahanna Lincoln High School though I do not represent my institution. I submit my testimony as a private citizen on behalf of myself, my former professors, and my current [and future] students.

I want to repeat: I am exhausted. And I am not alone: Ohio's educators are worn out. You may wonder why I am beginning my testimony with a statement of our collective emotional state. The answer is pretty obvious: Jerry Cirino and his cosponsors clearly haven't been talking to Ohio's educators if they believe SB1 represents the interests of our profession.

I am currently teaching public speaking and debate at GLHS where we cover the Aristotelian modes of persuasion. I'm not sure what will convince each of you in the chamber today, so I will try them all.

Let's start with ethos. Ethos is the appeal to credibility and character.

For a bill that claims to value the power of intellectual discourse, I am surprised to see that intellectual discourse doesn't have any power over Ohio Senators. According to [The Ohio Capital Journal](#), "More than 200 people came to the Ohio Statehouse to testify during [the] Ohio Senate Higher Education Committee meeting and more than 830 people submitted testimony." Despite all these peoples' voices sharing their experience, voting remained largely along party lines of 21-11 (Thanks Senators Blessing and Patton!). In the bill, intellectual diversity is defined as "multiple, divergent, and varied perspectives," yet when the Ohio Senate is met with these exact perspectives, they refuse to engage, staying entrenched in their respective party's positions. How, exactly, does this government represent the people? It is up to you, House of Representatives, to show us that you hear us, and you represent us.

Next, is pathos. Pathos is the appeal to emotion.

The message that the Ohio government is sending to students by eliminating DEI policies is this: we don't care about you. We don't care about what you need to learn. We don't care about your lived experience. We don't care if you feel alone at our school. We don't care that you need financial support to attend. We don't care that you might be more likely to be assaulted on our campus or struggle with mental health. We don't care that you can't access your class with your wheelchair. And in fact, we actively ban any orientation or training course

for staff or students that would seek to make the world just a little bit more welcoming, kind, or understanding to anyone like you.

Of course, we can't forget logos. The appeal to logic & reason.

There are so many reasons why this bill will harm Ohioans across multiple sectors. There will be an abundance of written and spoken testimonies today that outline these harms, so I'll try to be brief.

- Challenging tenure policies would be antithetical to one of the bills' purposes: fostering intellectual diversity. Tenure is the vehicle that enables professors to speak freely and research widely. Without protection, intellectual curiosity will diminish.
- We need the best and brightest to innovate and solve today's problems, and eliminating DEI programs will take us further from that goal. This will happen in two ways: first, practitioners won't have the grants, funding, or knowledge that will help develop specialized solutions and treatments for problems that impact select communities. Second, it will discourage talented people from pursuing fields in which they represent the minority.
- Attacking unions shows Ohioans, and the country, that the government is afraid of workers and that universities have something to hide. Striking is a right to stand up against an employer who won't listen and bargain. It is a last resort. Dismantling workers' rights in our state will discourage talent from settling here while our population continues to decline and age.
- Finally, the way forward is not to replace one ideology with another. All perspectives are situated within a context, and our goal in higher education is to get students to understand the context and learn to deconstruct the framework. Neutrality or centrism is a framework in itself that cannot be favored above others under your own bill.

Lastly, kairos. An often forgotten appeal to time & context.

On TikTok, Gen Z says things are 'Ohio' when something is "weird, embarrassing, or cringeworthy," and honestly – I can see why.

Ohio educators are tired. For the last five years, we have been on the frontlines of the pandemic. We are teaching a generation that has been negatively and permanently impacted by unfettered access to technology. We are seeing huge spikes in mental health concerns. We are both struggling with and integrating new AI technology that threatens students' abilities to think critically at all. And now, we are fighting for our jobs, our funding, our rights, and our livelihoods.

You have a choice today to stand up for what is right for Ohio educators and students. From the testimonies in the Senate last month and the testimonies in the House today, it is blatantly clear: vote no on SB1.