

March 11, 2025

House of Representatives

Opposition Testimony on SB1

Chairperson Tom Young, Vice Chair Kevin Ritter, Ranking Member Beryl Piccolantonio and members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to testify. My name is Lisa Lee Kohler. I am a lifelong Ohioan, a mom and a very concerned citizen. I am strongly opposed to SB1, the Enacted Advance Ohio Higher Education Act.

Growing up in Canfield Ohio, my parents drilled the importance of a good well rounded education into me. They were convinced that such an education was the key to a successful life. We moved to Canfield Ohio, because it was the best school in the area and had never failed a school levy. Good times way back then. I went on to attend both Ohio State University and Youngstown State University. I owned & operated a successful insurance agency, retiring during the COVID Pandemic. I did better than my parents, who did better than their parents. The way the American dream worked before the Republican Party decided that the government should be run like a business and broke us.

I raised my daughter with the same emphasis on education. She is a higher education project director, whose project, advancing women in STEM at small Appalachian colleges has been rescinded by DOGE. In today's hostile to education environment her PHD in Higher Education is becoming less valuable and sadly, because of the regressive policies in our State and our Nation, she is unlikely to "do better." I have watched this legislative body play havoc with public education. I have watched Ohio's educational rankings drop. I have watched in horror, as men in power, currently holding high office boast that they will kill public education in Ohio. That they can do whatever they want, regardless of their constituents wants and needs.

The latest battle in the war on education is SB1 and its companion HB6. I am appalled. And, I believe, regardless of the rhetoric used to try to justify this bill to somehow make it palatable to the faithful, that the true goal is to exude control, indoctrinate the weak minded and keep the masses just dumb enough to keep supporting the régressives in power.

There should not be any limited or "off limit" topics at the college level. And educators should not be silenced or held to unreasonable standards. Education should inspire robust and free conversations. It is a complete fallacy that young adults cannot reach their own conclusions in their college courses. The extremists of Turning Point are certainly proof of that pudding. The bill also seems very lopsided, as I don't see any concern the Business, Finance & Economic students are being indoctrinated to conservative views. I can attest that my own Business & Economics education in the early 80's certainly did. This strangulation of diversity is shameful. Believe me, hatred & bigotry will still flourish without your additional assistance. The college experience should be a time of experimentation & expansion. Please do not clip the wings of our young adults.

And, this attempt to eliminate collective bargaining in higher education has also not gone unnoticed. Another bill to strip workers of their rights & dignity.

This bill is just another nail in the coffin for Ohio. Our school's reputations will fall as the best & brightest educators flee to other States that appreciate them. Our students will not stay in Ohio for an inferior education. Business will lose out on the best & brightest. Our collective society will be inferior to other states.

I insist you consider my testimony and the overwhelming number of opponents and vote NO on this harmful bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Respectfully,
Lisa Lee Kohler