

Testimony of Sarah Morgenstein
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 Sarah Morgenstein, and I am a professor of visual communication design at Cuyahoga Community College, where I have taught for 11 years. I do not represent Cuyahoga Community College, but rather I am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1, also known as the “Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act.” This bill, if passed, would have severe negative consequences for Ohio's higher education system and the state as a whole.

SB 1 threatens academic freedom and intellectual diversity, despite claiming to protect them. By banning Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and restricting discussions on certain topics, this bill would stifle the very essence of higher education — the free exchange of ideas.

The bill's provisions to prohibit faculty strikes and limit collective bargaining rights are particularly concerning. These restrictions represent the most significant attack on collective bargaining rights since Senate Bill 5 in 2011. Such measures would undermine the ability of educators to advocate for better working conditions and educational standards.

Furthermore, SB 1 would centralize control of education policy under the governor's office, reducing local representation and silencing the voices of families, voters, and taxpayers. This shift away from a democratically elected State Board of Education is a step backward for educational governance in Ohio.

The bill's vague language regarding “controversial beliefs or policies” could lead to the suppression of important discussions on topics like climate change, social issues, and other critical subjects. This would severely limit students' exposure to diverse perspectives and hinder their ability to develop critical thinking skills.

I urge you to reject Senate Bill 1. Instead, I encourage you to support policies that truly enhance academic freedom, protect workers' rights, and maintain local control over education. Our higher education system should foster open

dialogue, critical thinking, and prepare students for the diverse world they will enter upon graduation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sarah Morgenstein