

Testimony of Deb Mustard Gibson, RN, Retired APRN
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

Ohio House Higher Education Committee

Deb Mustard Gibson

5647 Hugh Dr.

Centerville, Ohio 45459

937-409-4456

debbiegibson55@yahoo.com

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My name is Deb Mustard Gibson, and I am writing as a **concerned citizen** in **strong opposition** to Senate Bill 1 (SB 1). This bill is not about improving education; it is a **politically motivated** attack that threatens academic freedom, weakens workforce development, and prioritizes ideology over facts. If passed, SB 1 will have **devastating consequences** for Ohio's higher education system, workforce, and economy.

SB 1 is an Unfounded Attack on Higher Education

One of the most troubling aspects of SB 1 is its attempt to **eliminate Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) from higher education. There is no evidence, no textbook, no clinical guideline, and no workforce development strategy that supports removing DEI.** DEI is not about division or political agendas—it ensures that students are **prepared for the real world**, where they will work with people of all backgrounds.

Employers across industries—healthcare, business, and technology—expect workers to be **culturally competent and adaptable.** Ignoring DEI in education weakens Ohio's ability to produce **competitive, well-prepared graduates**, which will ultimately **harm our economy and workforce.**

Additionally, SB 1 seeks to limit or outright ban instruction on **“controversial” topics**, including climate change, foreign policy, and electoral politics. **This vague and dangerous restriction** threatens the ability of educators to teach essential subjects **grounded in evidence, research, and**

fact. What happens when a medical student refuses to acknowledge racial disparities in maternal mortality? Or when an economics student insists that the Great Depression never happened? **Ohio cannot afford to produce graduates who are unprepared for reality.**

The Faculty Strike Ban is Based on a False Premise

Supporters of SB 1 claim that banning faculty strikes is necessary to prevent disruptions in education. **This is misleading.** The **last faculty strike in Ohio occurred in 2019** at Wright State University—after **two years of failed contract negotiations.** These strikes are rare, and when they do happen, they are the **result of administrative failures, not faculty irresponsibility.** Using this as justification for stripping educators of their rights is **dishonest and unnecessary.**

SB 1 also **prohibits collective bargaining** over critical issues like **workload, evaluations, tenure, and retrenchment.** This means faculty will have no say in the policies that directly impact their ability to educate students. **This is not about preventing disruptions—it is about silencing educators.**

Overreach and Government Control in Higher Education

SB 1 **radically expands government overreach** in higher education. The bill:

- **Reduces trustee terms** from nine to six years, increasing political turnover and instability in governance.
- **Mandates “statements of commitment”** that institutions must include on official documents, limiting institutional autonomy.
- **Requires public syllabi postings, including instructor qualifications and course materials,** potentially exposing faculty to harassment and political attacks.
- **Bans institutional partnerships with China,** even in research collaborations that have nothing to do with politics.

These provisions do **nothing to improve education** but instead place institutions **under tighter political control, stifling innovation and independence.**

SB 1 Silences the Public and Weakens Ohio’s Future

The fact that **opposition testimony has been limited to just three hours** speaks volumes. If SB 1 truly benefits Ohio, why are legislators **afraid to hear from the people?** The public deserves to have its voice heard on a bill that will have lasting consequences on our students, universities, and workforce.

Conclusion: SB 1 is a Mistake for Ohio

If SB 1 becomes law, **Ohio will suffer**. Talented students and educators will leave the state, and our universities will struggle to compete on a national level. This bill does nothing to improve education, but it does a great deal to undermine it.

I urge you to **reject SB 1** and stand with the students, workers, and businesses that depend on a strong, independent education system. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Deb Mustard Gibson

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debbiegibson55@yahoo.com