

Testimony of Brian Edmiston, PhD  
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. Brian Edmiston, and I am a Professor of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University, where I have taught for 29 years. I do not represent Ohio State but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

I am writing in opposition to the passage of SB1 as it is currently drafted. I focus on only a few of the scores of serious reservations I have about this bill.

1. University Course Syllabi Requirements.

Including the names and contact information of instructors on any publicly accessible syllabus is dangerous as it could lead to harassment and targeting.

2. Controversial Beliefs or Policies

- a. There is no definition of “political controversy” leaving open the possibility that anyone can define it and thus complain about what is taught in any university course. For example, Holocaust deniers believe that what happened in Nazi Germany did not happen. A professor who opposes the policies of discrimination and exclusion that led to extermination in the camps in the Holocaust could be censured if this bill became law.
- b. There is no definition of “endorsing” or “opposing.” Thus, because, for example, “marriage” is one of the topics listed as “controversial” a teacher could fear censure for valuing of the institution of marriage or opposing bigamy.
- c. Learning beyond superficial understanding about any “controversial belief or policy” is impossible if faculty are prohibited from “endorsing or opposing any controversial belief or policy.” “Climate policies” is another controversial topic in the bill. Knowledge is not opinion. So, to teach about climate and not question the extent to which policies rely on scientific evidence would be miseducation.

3. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- a. The bill does not define “diversity, equity, and inclusion” so it is impossible to know what it means to ban DEI. What about ensuring inclusion of people with disabilities? What about addressing any gender discrimination?
- b. In terms of diversity, there is a fundamental contradiction built into the bill. “Intellectual diversity” as “multiple, divergent, and varied perspectives on an extensive range of public policy issues” is required to be demonstrated for course approval and in classroom discussion. Yet, the bill “prohibits any diversity, equity, and inclusion” and any “orientations” or “training.” Under the bill universities would be prohibited from orienting or training faculty in how to promote intellectual diversity.

