

Testimony of India Simmons, PhD Student at the Ohio State University
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 India Simmons, and I am a first-year doctoral student in African-American and African Studies at Ohio State University. I do not represent OSU, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen. I decided to attend this university because of its support for a wide array of perspectives and dedication to balanced research and classroom instruction. I am in opposition to SB-1 for these reasons. I understand that the bill was created to promote different viewpoints in the classroom, particularly those from moderate and conservative members of the community. While I do think it is important to ensure that everyone has a space to share their perspectives without the threat of retaliation, I do not think we should be promoting government overreach in order to do so. We cannot expect to create spaces of scholastic diversity if there are such harsh limitations on what can be discussed in the classroom in addition to the increasing reliance on surveillance and watchlists to punish people for the crime of 'wrong think.' For instance, people on the left have created mass block lists online to censor the opinions of those deemed to be ['trans-exclusionary radical feminists'](#). Similarly, many right wing pundits have co-signed Turning Point U.S.A.'s development of the ['Professor Watchlist'](#) which collects and documents the information of professors at various universities across the country that are alleged to be radical progressives.

Being that politics is a spectrum, I do not feel that I am fully represented by one party or belief system across all major issues. In fact, I find that both extreme conservatives and liberals subscribe to the all-or-nothing mentality. Before a bill like this was drafted, there should have been greater efforts to support accessible education, community outreach, and the development of forums in which Ohio citizens can address their thoughts and vote specifically on controversial topics. Abruptly swinging the pendulum from the left to the right is not going to bring about meaningful conversation. However, it will inspire professors and students to work together outside the classroom or even hide information from the university and the government should syllabus submission become mandatory. SB-1 would be incredibly difficult to enforce and more importantly, it does not define how educational diversity will be supported.

Ultimately, the bill is starkly unpopular and will not encourage more people to apply to colleges and universities in the state of Ohio. In fact, people preparing to apply to colleges may feel more inclined to apply to a school that has shown their dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives while finding creative ways to ensure that conservatives, moderates, and liberals can have a platform and community in higher education. As a result, I think it is critical to reassess the purpose and potential impacts of this bill to ensure that all parties are being adequately represented in the classroom and in the law.