

Testimony of Zoey November

Before the House Higher Education Committee

Representative Tom Young, Chair

March 11, 2025

Good Morning. Thank you Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee for allowing me to testify today. My name is Zoey November, and I am here to urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

Senate Bill 1 is catastrophically harmful, not only towards students, educators, and educational institutions, but to all of Ohio's people and to Ohio itself. Let me explain why.

SB 1 censors and prohibits all education related to “controversial topics” including **environmental policy and climate research**. This bill effectively kills The Ohio State University's entire College of Food, Agriculture and Environmental Science (CFAES), whose research and curriculum is fundamentally based in the scientific understanding of two such “controversial topics” – evolutionary biology and anthropogenic climate change. I don't have information on how much of The Ohio State University's financial revenue comes from CFAES, or what the economic impact to Ohio's GDP would be without the agricultural research and advancements from CFAES, but it would be prudent to consider the magnitude of these potential losses before plowing ahead with this ridiculous Senate Bill.

The Ohio State University's School of the Environment and Natural Resources (a single division of CFAES) offers over 120 undergraduate courses and 95 graduate courses that prepare students for careers in soil science, ecology, forestry, wildlife management, environmental policy, natural resource management, agricultural development, freshwater management, and many other critical environmental fields. These students become Ohio's working professionals who ensure that we have clean, safe water to drink, food to eat, oxygenated air to breathe, and a place that is safe to live and call home for ourselves and

future generations. Under SB 1, these 215 academic courses would all be scrapped, depriving the environmental sector of its next generation of employees, wiping out an entire sector of Ohio's workforce.

The losses to economy and public welfare are incalculable, as the environmental sector accounts for a significant percentage of Ohio's GDP. Wildlife recreation alone, including fishing, hunting, and birding, contributes \$12.5 billion to Ohio's GDP each year¹, and generates \$24 billion in consumer spending, with \$1.5 billion in state and local tax revenue.² The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, supported by the U.S. EPA, estimates that investing in the environmental care and restoration of Lake Erie and its surrounding watershed would generate at least \$100 billion in direct benefits and reduced municipal costs.³ SB 1, however, discounts all of the economic benefits of our natural resources, because it deems them too "controversial" to be studied, taught, or researched.

Under SB 1, you can kiss goodbye to your entire agricultural industry – it got wiped out by pests, disease, and drought since agricultural research ground to a halt. Kiss goodbye to the 30% of Ohio that is currently forested land, because there's no one left to manage it and it's all been logged to the ground or decimated by invasive pests. Kiss goodbye to your freshwater lakes and streams, because they're filled with untreated wastewater, toxic blue-green algae, and invasive species. Kiss goodbye to your eggs at the supermarket and your fast-food chicken dinners, because educating anyone on the management of avian influenza is illegal now, it's too "controversial" of a topic.

SB 1 is a disastrous threat to all the people of Ohio, not just academia. I ask you to take my testimony to heart and vote NO on this bill before it harms the lives of countless Ohioans. Thank you for hearing my testimony today. I am happy to take any questions you may have.

1. <https://wildlifemanagement.institute/outdoor-news-bulletin/december-2023/fish-and-wildlife-recreation-contributes-billions-ohios-economy>
2. https://aede.osu.edu/sites/aede/files/imce/images/Economic%20Valuation%20of%20Natural%20Areas%20in%20Ohio_November%205%202019.pdf
3. <https://www.glc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Ohio-GLRISStateFactsheet-2014.pdf>