Chairman Young, Vice Chairman Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Charlie Mace, and I am a student at The Ohio State University. I am submitting this testimony to oppose Substitute Senate Bill 1, the *Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act*.

The definition of a "controversial belief of policy" as "any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion" (lines 610-614) is as broad as it is vague. There is no guidance in the bill about how to define such a belief or policy, aside from a collection of examples that the authors believe to be controversial. Universities are places for free discussion and learning, and restricting statements on any topic that is or could be argued to be "controversial" is providing current and future legislators with **a powerful and dangerous weapon for censorship.** Universities and instructors should not be prohibited from taking stances on topics such as climate change, wherein there is overwhelming scientific consensus[1]. **As an Ohio student, I do not believe that state government should play this role in deciding what topics are "controversial," and what statements regarding those topics are permitted by universities.**

This bill also, without any evidence that diversity equity and inclusion programs (DEI) are harming universities, prohibits such programs. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are all qualities that strengthen intellectual discussion in universities, and eliminating programs that enhance them undercuts the intellectual diversity of our institutions. As the authors of this legislation acknowledge, intellectual diversity is a core foundation of any institution of learning. **The elimination of these programs, which strive to make a more welcoming and diverse community, will directly and severely harm the learning environment in Ohio universities.**

Finally, the restriction on faculty labor organization proposed in this legislation is appalling and unjust. Prohibiting workload, evaluations, tenure, and entrenchment as collective bargaining subjects needlessly undercuts the authority of a faculty labor union to negotiate on behalf of its members. These subjects are core components of faculty employment, and should be negotiated on as any other part of an employment contract would be. This proposed bill also prohibits faculty from striking, taking away an essential tool of organized labor. As an Ohio student, I want my instructors to have the ability to advocate for themselves as any worker should. **These blatantly anti-worker changes will lead to worse working conditions for faculty, and ultimately harm education and research at Ohio universities.**

This legislation takes Ohio's universities backwards. I ask that our representatives vote in the interests of Ohio students, and reject this bill.

Thank you for your time,

Charlie Mace

---

[1] https://climate.nasa.gov/faq/17/do-scientists-agree-on-climate-change