

Testimony of Donya Waugh, MA
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 Donya Waugh, and I am a professor of Psychology at Cuyahoga Community College, or Tri-C, affectionately, where I have taught for 15 years. I do not represent Cuyahoga Community College, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen. I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1 and ask that all committee members vote no on this bill for many reasons, but today I will focus on the portion that reads: “(4) Affirm and declare that faculty and staff shall allow and encourage students to reach their own conclusions about all controversial beliefs or policies and shall not seek to indoctrinate any social, political, or religious point of view....”

I believe the premise of this bill, that we indoctrinate the students we teach, is incorrect. In all my years of teaching and observing other professors, I have never witnessed anything close to indoctrination. As we educate students, we encourage and even assess critical thinking. We solicit student experiences and opinions. In fact, the many views of students in the classroom are precisely what makes the education process so rich and enlightening. We encourage free inquiry. Views are discussed from many scholars on any given topic and that includes the students. For example, when I am discussing the many theories on how humans develop in Life Span Development, I ask students “How do you think humans develop? What is your theory?” When discussing religious beliefs, I ask students to share their beliefs if they wish to. I have never shared my own religious beliefs nor political affiliation with students. I stick to the curriculum and my thoughts and opinions are not included in that curriculum. When I was in college and graduate school, my professors did the same; kept themselves out of the curriculum and encouraged us to think for ourselves.

Since the premise of this bill is incorrect, I believe this bill is incorrect. I strongly oppose this bill and ask that all committee members vote no on this bill. Furthermore, I encourage any members of the committee to join any of my classes at any time. If you join, you will see how much I respect the educational process and because of my respect for the process, I have never and would never tell a student what to believe or how to live their lives.

Thank you for reading this personal account.

Donya Waugh