

Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 1
Before the House Higher Education Committee
Representative Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Saba Rehan and I currently am a junior at The Ohio State University studying both neuroscience and history. I'm a proud recipient of the Morrill Scholarship, and I am here today to show my utter disgust at the contents contained in this bill.

This bill has been purported as being a way to protect "our children" from the "horrible indoctrination of higher education," but I find it funny that our autonomy is questioned when it is convenient for this body. In one hand, I could be holding my high school diploma and in the other, a weapon of war because I'm apparently now old enough to give my life to a country but not old enough to have a say when voting on University matters. I can sign onto loans that will cripple me for the rest of my life, prevent me from receiving adequate housing or health care, but thank God SB1 shut down the Black Cultural Center on campus! The contents of the bill hammer home a point we've all known for a long time: I am a child when it comes to matters of the mind but an adult when I become of benefit to the state.

You say that the entirety of the Letter from Birmingham Jail will be read in class, but I wonder if you all have read it in full, and if so, I wonder how you were able to read it and still support this bill. King writes, "An unjust law is a code inflicted upon a minority which that minority had no part in enacting or creating because it did not have the unhampered right to vote." Seeing as though not only are you literally taking away the student right to vote on a university level but also that this bill downright ignores the overwhelming majority of citizens opposing it, it seems as though this body is inviting Ohioans to, as Dr. King writes, resist the unjust law. Or are we picking and choosing which contents of the letter to expand upon? Will we discuss the events that led to King writing this letter, the systematic racism and white supremacy that was a main tenant in state and local legislatures that empowered everyday citizens to brutalize and enact violence against Black Americans? Or will this body continue to uphold the Master Narrative and pretend that the Letter from Birmingham Jail happened in a vacuum based on the actions of a few bad apples?

"The Wealth of Nations" must also be discussed in class to rectify the stained image of capitalism, never mind that King considered himself to be an anti-capitalist. "The Wealth of Nations" was used to justify colonialism, across the world and even in this country, in which entire civilizations experienced both a cultural and physical genocide through the mass rape,

starvation, imprisonment, and slavery of their people. This is not up for debate, this is fact. I ask yet again, will this too be talked about?

The people in this building aren't asking for much. All we're asking is for you to do your job. And based on the overwhelming number of testimony you've received, it appears that the correct answer is to vote no on SB1.