

Testimony on Senate Bill 1, as it moves to the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee  
Submitted via email by Lisa Vahey, Shaker Heights, lvahey@gmail.com  
March 10, 2025

Dear Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee, thank you for allowing me to share my testimony opposing SB 1. I know over 800 opponents provided testimony when this bill was in front of your Senate colleagues. I hope House committee members will spend more time in careful consideration of the views of Ohians letting you know we think this bill harms our state in many ways.

I am an educator who consults in public, private, faith-based and charter schools across Ohio. I'm also the mother of two public high school graduates, an active community volunteer - in Shaker Heights, through my church, and as an advocate for education. I know that SB 1 will harm Ohio, and I'm encouraging this committee to oppose SB 1.

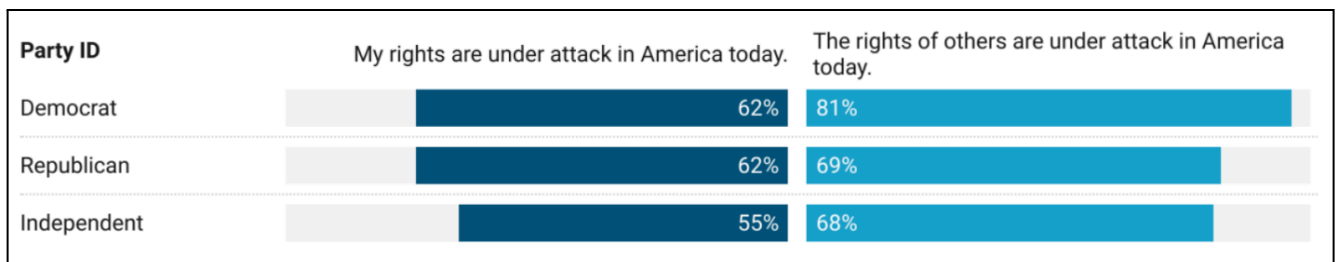
Last year's story in the *Ohio Capital Journal* unpacked that Ohio's public college and community college enrollment has dropped 12% since 2012, despite the fact that our high school graduate rate has increased.

<https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2023/04/17/ohio-higher-education-enrollment-drops-12-over-decade>

And in January 2025, we learned that even though there were slight increases in some main campus enrollments, the Ohio enrollment numbers continue to tumble:

<https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2025/01/08/what-challenges-are-ohio-colleges-and-universities-encountering/>

As elected officials serving Ohio, it's time to listen to constituents. I'd like your Committee to do **whatever it can to connect with young Ohioans** and hear what matters to them and their families. Young people have been showing up at the State House, and their voices matter! In addition, When researchers at Harvard's Kennedy School at the Institute of Politics polled young people late last year, no matter their party affiliation, young people felt their rights, and the rights of others, were under attack:



Source: <https://iop.harvard.edu/fall-2022-harvard-youth-poll>

Here in Ohio, when Baldwin Wallace University and the Ohio Children's Defense Fund polled families, no matter the demographic, families wanted equity prioritized:

Q67: “How important do you think it is that schools prioritize equity? (Equity in education is defined as: each student has access to relevant and challenging academic experiences and educational resources necessary for success across race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background and/or income.)”

- 90% of parents think it is important that schools prioritize equity.
  - 92% of women agreed vs. 88% of men ( $p = 0.0049$ ).
  - 92% of younger parents agreed vs. 88% of older parents ( $p = 0.0067$ ).
  - 91% of parents with an associate’s degree or less agreed vs. 87% of parents with a bachelor’s degree or more ( $p = 0.0031$ ).
  - 95% of urban parents agreed, followed by 89% of suburban parents, and 88% of rural parents ( $p = 0.0137$ ).
  - 95% of Democrats agreed, followed by 90% of Republicans, and 87% of Independents ( $p = 0.0002$ ).

Source: <https://cdfohio.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2022/08/BW-CRI-Topline-Report.pdf>

And a poll by Tallo, a STEM-focused organization, found these top two responses from students:

- 36% said that developing skills and know-how for a high quality career was their top priority
- Another 28% said that personal growth (through curriculum and faculty that challenge students) was a strong preference

Source: <https://tallo.com/updates/data-insights/what-high-school-college-students-want-higher-education/>

And please take a look at the 56 skills and attitudes that the experts at McKinsey & Company researched as those that “all citizens will benefit from having... no matter the sector in which they work or their occupation”:

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Lisa Vahey opposition testimony, SB 1, page 3 (3/10/25)

Source:

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/defining-the-skills-citizens-will-need-in-the-future-world-of-work>

I'll call out a few, across several of the categories:

<i>Understanding bias</i>	<i>Active listening</i>	<i>Empathy</i>
<i>Fostering inclusiveness</i>	<i>Resolving conflicts</i>	<i>Breaking orthodoxies</i>
<i>Understanding own emotions and triggers</i>		

I want to now, respectfully, connect the dots:

- Ohio college enrollment is dropping!
- Young people feel their rights and others are under attack, and
- their families *want* a focus on equity and in fact, and students want experiences that prepare them for jobs - including personal growth and challenging experiences
- our schools - secondary, community college and higher ed institutions - should be adjusting and organizing, so our students graduate with the skills and dispositions needed for 21st century workplace success.

As our Senate leaders around higher education, I ask you to take leadership to:

- Raise Ohio college enrollment
- Act to protect all young people's right
- Prepare Ohio students to thrive in the 21st Century workforce

SB 1 does NONE OF THESE THINGS. It threatens enrollment, student's rights, inclusion for all, and skill building for the future. It makes it *harder* for Ohio students to get jobs when they graduate - when I listen to young people, they say SB 1

- Creates an environment of distrust and confusion for students and faculty.
- Stifles and silences the kind of discourse that helps them grow their skills.
- Pulls critical resources - time AND money - away from teaching and into unnecessary record-keeping and documentation.

And as I talk with other parents with high school students, they reinforce what I've shared - SB 1 is going to push students out of Ohio higher education - and potentially, out of Ohio for the long term. Our young people (and their families) want to be heard. And they want their hard-earned tuition dollars and the college debt they incur to pay off when they gain the skills (like empathy, understanding bias and resolving conflict) that they need for workplace success. SB 1 takes that opportunity away. ***SB 1 destroys our higher ed system, ignores what Ohio students and families need and want, and leaves us with a less-prepared workforce.***

Please think clearly about what we need. Listen to our students. Please **OPPOSE SB 1.**

