

Testimony by: Jill Galvan
To: House 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:

Thank you very much for hearing my testimony today. Ohio has been my home for a long time. I'm a faculty member at Ohio State. I speak today not on behalf of my university, but rather as a private citizen. I'm here to oppose SB1, not only as a wrong move for colleges, but as a wrong move for Ohio.

My testimony, like that of others today, builds on the over 1,000 opponent testimonies to SB1 in the Senate hearing a month ago. That extraordinary number included students, faculty, and staff in higher education; religious leaders; representatives of community organizations; and labor leaders. SB1 would be devastating for the workforce in higher education, because it outright eliminates labor rights. Besides prohibiting faculty strikes, it even limits what faculty can collectively bargain about. Collective bargaining means nothing when you take whole areas—like job security, how performance is evaluated, and work conditions—off the table.

This bill does not serve Ohio workers, a great many of whom are employed in colleges and universities across the state. In fact, over the past few years, it's been unclear to me who SB1 and its predecessor, SB83, do serve. I've often seen the claim that SB1 serves students because right now, higher education tries to pour thought into their heads, aggressively. But based on many years in this profession and many interactions with colleagues, I know that this is not the case. A main part of teaching is not only encouraging critical inquiry, but making sure that all students feel welcome, no matter their backgrounds. This bill works on the premise that limiting student thought inhibits education. This is absolutely true. But like all educators, faculty already know it. As part of our professional training, we study the science of teaching, or pedagogy, to learn how best to cultivate learning while also caring for students as whole people. No matter the field—biology, history, climate science, political science, sociology, even literature—faculty teach evidence-based ideas. There's nothing inherently threatening about evidence. Communicating knowledge excites students and invites people in; it doesn't shut them out. The idea that classrooms are shaming or silencing spaces is a fallacy.

On top of this, the narrative that college currently harms students has been a distraction from this bill's workforce implications. There has been practically no discussion of one of college's main roles: to prepare students for jobs—for the expertise, complex thinking, and skills that employers want. SB1 would undoubtedly degrade education in Ohio by making classrooms places where people can't talk fully about knowledge and facts. In turn, this would underprepare students for a competitive workforce, which requires this level of critical thinking and knowledge-building. Besides the attempt to control curriculum, SB1's anti-DEI provisions are out-of-step with employers' needs because they don't acknowledge how diverse the population is, including here in Ohio, and in turn how diverse workplaces are. Strong college graduates go to work knowing

how to be leaders, partners, and collaborators. But SB1 treats diversity as a point of fear. If this bill passes, it will undermine graduates' skills in working across different perspectives.

Additionally, if SB1 becomes law, I have no doubt that it will drive students away from our state. Ohio will start to get a reputation as a closed-door state and one where a person can't actually get a full education. The national college admissions/enrollments context is important. As I've seen up close, not just as a faculty member, but also as a parent of two teenagers, college admissions are an extraordinarily competitive landscape right now. Colleges vie for students, not just within states, but *across* states: there's a huge attempt to grab other states' young people. Colleges start courting high school students in the *10th or 11th grade*. So, if a student or a family doesn't like what Ohio has to offer, they have plenty of other places to choose from. If students go elsewhere, that's a problem for Ohio, because college graduates continue to be, besides thoughtful members of communities, high-earning citizens. Their loss is a loss to Ohio's economic health.

Lastly, if this bill passes, faculty of all kinds—engineers, historians, art historians, economists, medical practitioners, urban planners, language specialists, humanists—will be less likely to come to Ohio. (In our profession, the job market is national, and sometimes international.) The hiring process takes many months, for thorough vetting of candidates, so these effects may not be immediately apparent, but they will exist. Faculty talk—a lot right now—at conferences, in professional publications, and on social media about good and bad places to work. Moreover, faculty who currently work here in Ohio will leave. The lack of labor rights, the accusation of irresponsible teaching, and the monitoring of course syllabi will take a toll. If the Ohio legislature passes a law that says to a potential faculty hire, we will surveil your courses and allow for easy doxing and harassment of you, by forcing you to post personally identifying information and classroom plans; we don't believe you can be trusted to determine the best programs, so we're going to eliminate that issue from collective bargaining; you're an expert in your field, but we're going to control what you can teach by calling certain topics “controversial”—all of these will be major disincentives to come here or stay here. Our state would be robbed of much expertise.

Additionally, if colleges can't attract good faculty, that puts those institutions themselves in jeopardy. That matters because colleges are major economic engines in our state. Within communities across Ohio, they function like other large-scale employers to create many jobs. If colleges fail, that's a recipe for communities that take a turn for the worse.

I respectfully urge you look at the big picture and understand why people aren't supporting this bill. It would do a lot of damage, with no return.

Thank you for your time.