

Testimony Opposing Ohio Senate Bill 1

Dear Chairperson and Members of the House Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am the daughter of a coal miner and retired police officer from Monroe County, Ohio. I graduated from Ohio University in 2000 and strongly oppose Senate Bill 1 (SB 1) and its companion bill, House Bill 6 (HB 6). I am the parent of a high school senior with a 4.49 GPA who has received merit and presidential scholarships from multiple universities, both in-state and out-of-state. His achievements reflect his academic excellence and dedication to countless community service hours.

Among his scholarship offers is one from an Ohio public university, awarded through a program designed to make higher education more accessible for high-achieving students from diverse backgrounds. This scholarship, which he earned by demonstrating academic excellence and a commitment to fostering diversity, is the maximum award through this initiative. However, under SB 1, programs like this may no longer exist or be forced to change in ways that could impact students who have already been awarded. Consequently, students who have met every expectation of academic excellence may jeopardize their financial aid simply because their scholarship acknowledges the importance of diversity and inclusion.

I am also deeply concerned about the bill's approach to faculty and staff evaluation. SB 1 allows student evaluations to play a decisive role in faculty and staff performance reviews, introducing significant risks. Students, particularly undergraduates, may lack the maturity or perspective to assess an educator's effectiveness fairly. A professor, for example, who upholds high academic standards or challenges students intellectually could be penalized with poor evaluations—not due to inadequate teaching but because of resistance to rigorous expectations. Student evaluations can be influenced by personal grievances or biases, potentially leading to unjust consequences for faculty members who do their jobs with integrity. Ohio's universities should prioritize academic excellence and not subject faculty to unstable and subjective review processes.

SB 1 fundamentally weakens Ohio's public higher education system, limiting academic freedom, removing key institutional supports, and discouraging top students and faculty from choosing Ohio's universities. With another child in high school, my family had hoped to keep our college search within Ohio. However, my high school senior has already decided to attend an out-of-state university where diversity, faculty retention, and academic freedom are still prioritized. This legislation has played a role in our decision, as it threatens to weaken Ohio's higher education system and the opportunities available to its students. If our state is committed to attracting and retaining exceptional scholars and educators, this legislation moves us in the wrong direction. I urge you to consider the long-term harm this bill will cause and vote against its passage. Ohio should invest in its students, not drive them—and their talents—elsewhere.

Respectfully, Elaine Su