

## **Testimony of Mary Rodriguez**

Before the House Higher Education Committee

Representative Tom Young, Chair

**March 10, 2025**

Good Morning. Thank you Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee for allowing me to testify today. My name is Mary Rodriguez (I represent myself in this testimony), and I am here to urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

As a long time educator, I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1 for many reasons. I truly believe in the power of education and the importance of engaging with all kinds of ideas, people, and challenging topics. With a declining population in the state, our institutions of higher education are well positioned to continue to bring Ohio revenue, encourage new residents, and enhance our workforce with new and fresh ideas. However, Senate Bill 1 will harm that forward potential. First of all, students and their families, not just from Ohio, want to get an excellent education that will prepare them to be successful in the workforce and engage with all kinds of people and differing ideas. Senate Bill 1 eliminates that type of preparation. It removes the very concepts that teach young people about how to engage with people with differing backgrounds through civil discourse and understanding social dynamics and history that have created those inequalities. Removing these topics is censoring the education we, as educators, are able to provide and the critical thinking that students develop from these topics. If Senate Bill 1 passes, students will lack fundamental knowledge that supports their very engagement in society and the ability to be in community with any and all people, fraying the very fabric of our nation.

Secondly, Senate Bill 1 stands to tear down systems that help our students feel welcome, supported, and safe. Our students of color, LGBTQ+, first generation, rural, women, etc. already navigate the university system with trepidation as they are faced with many challenges being in the University space. Ohio State and many other institutions are primarily white institutions and thus must have the support systems created for our minoritized groups to find community and support as they navigate the university system. Let me be clear here - these spaces however, do NOT just benefit our minoritized groups. All students benefit when they can find community, when they are supported, and when they feel welcomed and accepted.

Finally, as a university educator, I urge you to strongly oppose Senate Bill 1 for the mere fact that we have the opportunity to make Ohio stand out amongst one of the best states for higher education in the nation. Our students go on to do great things. However, Senate Bill 1 will encourage students who value a well-rounded education, founded in scientific evidence, and one that fosters critical thinking and 21st century workforce preparation, to go and fund their education elsewhere.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my testimony today. I ask you to take my testimony to heart and vote NO on this bill before it harms the education of Ohioans. I am happy to take any questions you may have.