

Thank you Chairman Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio and to all the distinguished members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee. My name is Travis Irvine and I am the current Communications Director and a former candidate for Governor with the Libertarian Party of Ohio (LPO). On behalf of myself, the LPO and the nearly 80,000 Ohioans who voted for me in 2018, I'm proud to stand with this multi-partisan alliance and submit my testimony in opposition to SB 1, which will only add more layers of unnecessary bureaucracy to the already burdensome environment surrounding Ohio's universities and the economies that stem from these prestigious institutions. I'll let the educational experts, students and my fellow opponents explain more about why SB 1 does irreparable harm to our state's higher education system, but my main concern is that SB 1 is ideologically a collection of contradictions that claims to promote "intellectual diversity" while simultaneously legislating the specific content, manner and topics that can be addressed. This would have a chilling effect on *true* academic freedom and make it more difficult for Ohio's colleges and universities to attract students and faculty of *all* political stripes going forward. SB 1 is big government, full stop.

I've watched some of the very few and limited testimonies that were in support of SB 1 from various "conservative" students as well as its sponsors who claim that passage of this bill will somehow "help" maintain academic freedom. In truth, students already have those academic freedoms and do not need big government to "save" them in what should be their own educational journeys. For years, I've heard college "conservatives" decry how they've been "persecuted" by "liberal" cultures on campuses across America, while simultaneously claiming that "liberal" students are also all "snowflakes" who are pushing "cancel culture" and giving in to "trigger warnings." And yet, here we are now with some young "conservatives" in Ohio claiming that their feelings are hurt because of "bias" in their classrooms — and the only thing that can stop it is SB 1 and big government? This is irony at best and hypocrisy at worst.

To illustrate how I became an eventual Libertarian candidate for governor of Ohio, I'd like to share a bit about my own educational experiences. I graduated from public school in the liberal bastion of Bexley, one of 26 valedictorians with a 4.0 GPA before attending Ohio University in another liberal bastion, Athens, Ohio — OU, oh yeah! There I began voting in some of my first statewide elections for a variety of candidates from all parties, but by the time I graduated in 2006, I was disillusioned with both Democrats and Republicans and the *entire* two-party system — leading me to find the Libertarian Party.

At no point during my undergraduate education did I question if my professors or administrators were trying to lead me towards one political ideology or another, or sway my beliefs to match their own personal political persuasions. In fact, I left OU more equipped to make my *own* political decisions and frankly, to decide whether either or *neither* of the two major political parties were right for me or worth an ounce of my time. I later went on to get my graduate degree from Columbia University's School of

Journalism in yet another liberal bastion — New York City — where I was the “token Libertarian” of my 2012 class. At *no* point during my time being educated in Bexley, Athens *or* New York City did I ever stop to think to myself, “Gee, I wish the government would crack down on what I can learn and how I can learn it.” No — instead, I remain grateful that during both my undergrad and graduate experiences at OU *and* Columbia, I got a chance to engage, debate and discuss any political issues of the day or differences with my fellow students and professors. Until this day, many of them remain some of my best friends and confidants, no matter how much we may agree or disagree or how different we all have become.

With regards to SB 1, what kind of “conservative” would ever want to bring in the heavy hand of big government to help dictate what students can learn from professors or even codify what some of their professors can teach them in the name of stopping some kind of perceived “bias?” Why are there Republican “conservatives” in the Statehouse so hellbent on “canceling” what they perceive to be “cancel culture” or cracking down on the purported “snowflakes” that they have now become? Does college not come with a big enough “trigger warning” for conservatives who *also* make fun of liberals for needing one? It’s time to “buck up, buttercup!” Or as Larry Householder once said, “put your big boy pants on.”

While I know the majority of my Democrat friends in the House are going to be “no” votes on this bill, I really want to appeal to the real “conservatives” on the Republican side to remind them that SB 1 is just another example of big government overreach from a supermajority that doesn’t seem to know the difference anymore between helping their own causes and overstepping their bounds. At the end of the day, going to college ain’t kindergarten — Mommy and Daddy aren’t going to hold your hand on your way to school anymore and Ohio’s college students — whether they be conservative, liberal, independent or God help them, Libertarian — don’t need their hands held by big government as they enter this important and *independent* time in their lives. SB 1 is a solution to a problem that doesn’t exist.

When it comes to higher education, it’s worth noting [that according to his own bio](#), SB 1’s main sponsor ONLY has degrees from ONE university — [Lake Erie College](#), which started as a women’s college. So ONE proper amendment to SB 1 would be to make it ONLY apply to Lake Erie College, since that’s the ONLY institution of higher education the sponsor has ever known. Then after being enacted there for four years — and if SB 1’s implication is a success — *maybe* it’ll be ready for primetime elsewhere. Otherwise, we don’t need *more* government intervention on Ohio’s campuses, we need less. Let students figure out their *own* way. I urge a “**no**” vote on SB 1 to protect *true* academic, intellectual and educational freedom in Ohio going forward. Thank you again for this opportunity — OU, oh yeah!

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