

## **Testimonial in Opposition to SB1: The Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act Submitted to the Ohio House Workforce and Higher Education Committee**

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Committee,

I write today in strong opposition to SB1, the so-called "Enact Advance Ohio Higher Education Act." While this bill claims to strengthen higher education in Ohio, it instead represents an alarming overreach of government control, a direct attack on academic freedom, and a dangerous precedent that threatens the core values of higher education.

**SB1 increases government control over universities**, undermining the autonomy of these institutions and replacing their internal governance with politically motivated mandates. Universities thrive when they are free to shape their own policies, curricula, and hiring practices without excessive state interference. This bill threatens that independence, setting a precedent for further government micromanagement of education.

Moreover, SB1 **eliminates diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs**, which play a crucial role in ensuring that students from all backgrounds have access to equal opportunities and support systems. These programs are not about exclusion or bias, but rather about fostering an environment where all students can succeed. By dismantling DEI initiatives, this bill weakens the competitiveness and reputation of Ohio's institutions, making them less attractive to students, faculty, and employers.

Additionally, the bill **restricts faculty rights and academic freedom**, imposing vague and politically charged restrictions that will chill open discourse and research. Academic freedom is the bedrock of higher education, allowing faculty to explore ideas, challenge assumptions, and contribute meaningfully to society. By limiting what professors can teach and discuss, SB1 curtails innovation and critical thinking—two qualities essential for a thriving democracy and economy.

SB1 also **introduces a state-mandated civic course**, dictating how civic education should be taught rather than allowing universities to develop their own curricula. True civic education encourages students to engage in diverse perspectives, debate openly, and think critically. This government-imposed version risks becoming ideological indoctrination rather than a balanced, well-rounded educational experience.

Furthermore, the bill **undermines student activism and free speech**, discouraging students from organizing, protesting, or advocating for change. The right to peacefully express dissent is a fundamental aspect of democracy, and universities should encourage students to engage in civic life rather than silence their voices. This bill sends a chilling message that student activism is unwelcome, which runs counter to the very principles of a free society.

Finally, SB1 **sets a dangerous precedent for other states**, signaling that government intrusion into higher education is acceptable. If Ohio adopts these measures, other states may follow suit,

leading to a nationwide erosion of academic freedom, diversity, and institutional autonomy. This is a step backward for American education and democracy.

For these reasons, I urge you to reject SB1. Rather than imposing government mandates that weaken higher education, the Ohio legislature should focus on policies that enhance academic excellence, support diverse student populations, and respect the foundational principles of free inquiry and expression.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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