

Testimony of Christina LaVecchia, PhD
Before the House Workforce and 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 to the chairman and to the committee for reading my written testimony in strong opposition to SB1. My name is Dr. Christina LaVecchia, and I am an Ohio parent, community member, and faculty member who teaches and researches in the state of Ohio. (Please note that I testify as an individual and not as a representative of my employer.)

My fear, if this *historically opposed* bill is to make it to a floor vote and pass, is that it will irrevocably weaken higher education in the state, leading to a brain drain, job losses, and revenue losses.

The University of Cincinnati has been enjoying unprecedented growth in enrollment over the past few years, in defiance of trends of declining enrollments elsewhere. This could easily reverse if this bill were to pass. One illustrative reason is a loss of accreditation that would be the natural consequence of the bill's prohibitions on teaching "controversial issues."

That is, the curriculum of many majors and programs (e.g., nursing, medicine, engineering, business, accounting, chemistry, computer science—to name but a few) is guided by accreditation standards. Crucially, the university as a whole is also answerable to the accreditation standards of the Higher Learning Commission. Those standards largely *require* that students be exposed to coursework around diversity. For example, the Higher Learning Commission expects that universities and colleges do the following: "Provide opportunities for civic engagement; demonstrate inclusive and equitable treatment of diverse populations; foster a climate of respect; composition of faculty and staff reflects human diversity" ("DEI in Accreditation" from *Insight Into Diversity*, <https://www.insightintodiversity.com/dei-in-accreditation/>).

The blanket prohibitions in the bill would make it impossible to meet these standards at both the university level and in many of our important majors, which would cut the legs out from under programs in Ohio schools. Students would leave to go out of state for accredited degree programs, particularly if they plan to pursue further study in professional (e.g., law, medicine, nursing) or graduate study.

Teaching these issues is critical for students to engage in the world: as professionals, these issues will impact their day-to-day lives. Moreover, how can we encourage "intellectual

diversity” when we are banned from addressing these issues altogether and giving students the opportunity to develop their voices and perspectives?

These are but a few issues that can and will arise if this dangerous artifact of government overreach were to begin directly affecting the lives of Ohioans. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this bill. Thank you again for allowing me to submit written testimony.