

Testimony of Patricia Enciso, Ph.D.
Before the Ohio House Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Committee Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio,
and Members of the Workforce and Higher Education Committee.
March 10, 2025

My name is Dr. Patricia Enciso, and I am a professor of education at Ohio State University, where I have taught for 30 years. I am a member of the Ohio State chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which has proudly defended academic freedom for over a century. I do not represent Ohio State, rather I reference my experiences as a faculty member and submit my testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

Across Ohio, students, parents, faculty, and business owners have delivered hundreds of testimonies and thousands of phone calls and emails to Ohio legislators in opposition to SB1. We know that this bill is not clear in its definitions, its protections of first amendment rights, or its economic impact. This bill purports to create an environment in higher education that will be open to diverse viewpoints and interests – which our universities already pursue with rigor and great success. In practice, this bill would cause chaos and fear and divert resources from Ohio’s greatest engines of progress.

If passed, faculty members will be forced to make materials (syllabi) public that are intellectual property – thus undermining faculty labor by making our research open to plagiarism and use by other institutions.

In addition, these materials would be searchable and thereby put faculty at risk of being targeted by vigilante groups and anti-democratic organizations as we do the very job SB1 asks of us: create an environment that will be open to diverse viewpoints and interests. The current political environment is rife with threats to the lives and livelihoods of people who are professional, informed, and dedicated to serving the public interest. SB1 would escalate distrust, fear and hate despite its claims to fairness. Why should faculty be expected to teach with a virtual (or worse, actual) gun to our heads.

Sen. Cirino argued, “my bill is simply designed to ensure free expression on campus and in the classroom. Critics say the bill promotes censorship -- they have it exactly backwards. This bill will allow students to exercise their right to free speech without threat of reprisal by professors or administrators. It will permit the marketplace of ideas to flourish, which is the ideal environment for any educational institution.”

Sen. Cirino overlooks the fact that free speech is already highly valued among faculty and students and protected without threat of reprisal. We ask students to show evidence for their views and respect their intellect and curiosity. Clearly, OSU produces graduates whose views extend across a wide ideological spectrum. What evidence is there of reprisals? Where are the

student complaints? Ohio's students overwhelmingly **oppose** SB1. Students know they have the right to speak and question without reprisal – that is a bedrock foundation for higher education.

Ironically, SB1 introduces the mechanisms for reprisal by students – against faculty and administrators. SB1 establishes a double standard that protects the speech rights of some at the expense of other's speech rights. That is the definition of a first amendment rights violation.

If Ohio House members have concerns related to specific representations and controversies, they should meet with faculty and students to understand how their concerns can be addressed. This bill allows for no dialogue – only surveillance, with no parameters or definitions. Instead of upending the fair and decent processes by which Ohio's higher education invests in student learning, members should, as Ranking Member Piccolantonio argues, “listen to key stakeholders and look for bipartisan solutions to some of the most pressing and valid concerns.”