

Testimony of Nick Kawa, Ph.D.
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:

My name is Nick Kawa, and I am an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the Ohio State University, where I have taught for 9 years. Today, I am here, however, to submit this testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

This bill poses a major threat to instructors and students at public institutions of higher education here in Ohio. It would make all educators vulnerable to attack and intimidation by mandating that all syllabi be made publicly available and searchable with personal contact info of instructors. It would also strongly discourage educators from discussing and assessing any so-called “controversial belief or policy” in college classrooms. Regardless of where students stand on the so-called controversial issues specified in this bill—including marriage, immigration, climate change, and foreign policy—they need to learn to engage in civil discourse with others on these subjects. They also need faculty mentors who can model from them how to do so. This is foundational to our democracy. It’s also necessary for navigating an increasingly complex yet interconnected world that is rife with misinformation and disinformation. To deny students the opportunity to debate these vital issues with their professors, this bill will inflict harm on students because it will fail to prepare them for their futures as professionals, as family members, as neighbors and friends, and yes, as citizens, too.

Ohioans opposed this wildly unpopular bill when it was first introduced, nearly two years ago, as Senate Bill 83. I urge you to listen to the people of Ohio again and oppose SB 1. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony and I am happy to take any questions you may have.