

Testimony of Brent Miller
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 Brent Miller, and I am a current student at Ohio State. I write today in opposition to SB1/HB6.

Supporters of SB1 claim that it would protect intellectual diversity. But in reality, it would do the opposite. This legislation's original sponsor says, "all topics can be discussed as long as intellectual diversity is promoted." This means that the bill would force faculty to give credibility to fringe or discredited viewpoints in the name of balance. This false equivalency weakens the educational experience. A history professor should not be compelled to remain silent if a student presents pro-segregation ideology as equally valid a perspective as the advancement of civil rights. This bill will create a chilling effect where faculty members hesitate to challenge misinformation, fearing that doing so might be seen as ideological bias rather than responsible teaching.

In fact, proponents of this legislation claim it will protect students from self-censorship, but once again, the actual impact will be the severance of a key piece of higher education: developing the ability to engage with and challenge difficult, complex ideas, even when it may be unpopular. This bill assumes we, students, are fragile, unable to advocate for ourselves, and need legislative intervention to ensure we can speak our minds. But my peers and I are not afraid of debate – we welcome it! What we don't need is a law that dictates how those debates unfold or forces professors to give equal weight to ideas that are factually unsound or socially harmful.

Finally, this bill would weaken Ohio's ability to attract and retain top-tier faculty by making it illegal for university employees to go on strike. The right to collectively bargain is meaningless without the ability to withhold labor as a last resort. Strikes are crucial for ensuring fair wages, reasonable workloads, and academic freedom protections. By stripping faculty of this right, SB1 would make Ohio a less attractive place to teach and conduct research. Talented professors will leave, and fewer highly qualified educators will want to come to institutions where they would have fewer protections than their peers in other states. The result? A weakened higher education system that shortchanges students and undermines Ohio's reputation as a leader in academia.

This legislation is not about protecting free speech, nor is it about improving education. It is a blatant power grab, a consolidation of control over universities that devalues the education received by students and imposes an ideological agenda on institutions that should be independent centers of learning and exploration.

I urge you to reject this bill and protect the integrity of Ohio's higher education system.