

SB 1 Testimony for 3/11/25

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Elisa Stone Leahy. I am an Ohio author, a public library employee and the mother of three teenagers. I am strongly opposed to SB 1 and its companion bill HB 6.

My oldest child begins college this Fall, which means I will likely have children attending college for the next nine years. Reading over the content of this bill as a parent is horrifying. It is remarkable that any bill would attempt to force educators to take an “all sides” approach to historic realities such as the Holocaust or scientific facts such as the shape of the Earth. Yet this bill sets the stage for an impaired, handcuffed approach to education, leaving teachers unable to correct their students on topics considered “controversial.” Facts matter. I do not want my children learning that truth is a matter of personal belief. This bill sets up a “choose your truth” education. I would not encourage my children to attend university in Ohio under these conditions. Many others feel the same way. Our state will lose students and the investment that their parents would have made in our economy.

We will also lose faculty members. Many of Ohio’s high level, career professors will likely lose any meaningful tenure under this bill and will look elsewhere for their careers. This bill puts an undue burden on educators when policies and practices **already** exist to ensure compliance with evaluations, tenure, performance, and more.

In addition to undermining educators' job security, this bill also bans their right to join a union. Unionizing is a fundamental part of our democratic, working society.

This bill claims to advocate for intellectual diversity, while removing all the programs developed to broaden and enrich the intellectual diversity of our educational institutions. People often have emotional responses to words they may not understand. The attack on words like diversity, equity and inclusion is an indication that we need to learn more about them, not erase them. I am white, as are my children. My white children are smart enough to learn about DEI and strong enough to understand the background and history of racism in our country, even if it is uncomfortable. I do not want the government telling my children’s professors that they are somehow too weak to hear about racism, simply because they are white and may feel guilt. Yes, learning about racism is uncomfortable. Learning often is. Higher education is not meant to be a feel good, “A for effort” experience.

I’ve worked hard to raise kids who can be wrong or feel uncomfortable, and still pick themselves back up, learn from the experience, and go on to find success. This bill undermines every parent who done so. It hurts our students, our educators, our economy and our reputation as a place of learning and integrity.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this harmful bill.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.