

Written Testimony of Kyle Barcroft Submitted to the Higher Education Committee,
Representative Tom Young – Chair on March 10, 2025

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio and members of the Senate Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit my written testimony. My name is Kyle Barcroft, a resident of Hilliard, Ohio. I am submitting testimony as a parent of a child in the Hilliard City School District, and the parent of a daughter enrolled at Miami University. I would like to express my extreme opposition to Ohio SB 1.

I believe that what is proposed in SB 1 undermines the mission of higher education. With the guise of freedom of speech and equality, what SB 1 proposes would actually make it nearly impossible to teach about historical events accurately, impossible to have open discussions and debates in the classroom, it would lead to a less inclusive and less supportive campus, and greatly diminish the quality of education.

As a Political Science major, my daughter would find it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to have an open debate on political theory, comparative politics, or public opinion. Course discussion on topics like the Holocaust, slavery, climate policies, immigration, or health care could all be considered controversial by this plan and would eliminate any kind of real discourse. It could also jeopardize a faculty member and open them up to pressure and threats from outside of the University. How can a college student possibly be prepared for a career when they are tempered by government-controlled discussion within the classroom?

Students should expect to receive a high-level education that comes with the cost of tuition, and this bill does nothing but hinder the level of quality education an institution can provide. Students, like my own, are now having to consider transferring out of state if this harmful bill is passed. I believe that SB 1 would make Ohio Universities less competitive and not only make it harder for them to bring in out-of-state students, but also hard to retain the best in-state students.

Based on the Ohio Constitution, education oversight is a shared responsibility of the General Assembly, Governor, State Board of Education, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and education leaders to ensure students are well-prepared for success. SB 1 would eliminate the democratically elected State BOE and would silence education leaders, voters, and students. SB 1 is anti-democratic, and it is written to push a partisan agenda that does not have actual education, educators, or students' well-being in mind. It is a policy that would promote a culture war on higher education institutions.

The students, parents, and educators of students in Ohio do not want legislature that micromanages higher education and threatens academic freedom on Ohio campuses. The policies are best kept at the institution itself, not top-down state mandates. I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on this destructive bill. Thank you again for this opportunity.

Kyle A. Barcroft