

Testimony of Matthew Crecelius, MSN, RN
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 Matthew Crecelius, and I am a current student at The Ohio State University College of Nursing. I do not represent The Ohio State University but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen.

As a future healthcare provider, an essential component of my education is a firm understanding public health, which includes the importance of vaccines. Vaccines are essential tools in preventing infectious diseases and safeguarding public health. Ensuring that students receive comprehensive education about vaccines is crucial for making informed decisions that impact our communities.

At present, we are able to engage in difficult discussions about how to engage members of the public in difficult discussions about the benefits of vaccines. However, my concern lies within SB-1's requirement for universities to remain neutral on controversial topics, including vaccines.

Specifically from the bill: "Declare that it [the university] will not endorse or oppose, as an institution, any controversial belief or policy, except on matters that directly impact the institution's funding or mission of discovery, improvement, and dissemination of knowledge", where "Controversial belief or policy" means any belief or policy that is the subject of political controversy, including issues such as climate policies, electoral politics, foreign policy, diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, immigration policy, marriage, or abortion".

This poses a significant threat to public health education. Vaccines, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, have become a subject of political debate. However, the scientific consensus is clear: vaccines save lives and are critical for preventing the spread of infectious diseases. By imposing neutrality, this bill undermines our faculty's ability to provide accurate, evidence-based information about vaccines to students.

SB-1's broad language banning discussions on "controversial beliefs or policies" creates a troubling effect on education. Faculty members may avoid discussing vaccines in detail to prevent potential repercussions, leading to a less comprehensive and effective public

health education. This could result in a generation of students who are less informed about the importance and efficacy of vaccines, ultimately jeopardizing Ohio's public health.

Furthermore, the elimination of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs could reduce support for initiatives that promote health education in underrepresented communities. These programs often include efforts to educate about vaccines and address health disparities. Without these programs, we risk widening the gap in health education and access to vaccines, particularly for marginalized populations. Ultimately, this is likely to impart greater strain on Ohio's healthcare system that is already under stress.

Increased state oversight over university curricula could also limit the ability of educators to design and implement courses that include detailed information about vaccines. This could result in a less robust public health education and hinder our efforts to combat vaccine misinformation.

In conclusion, Ohio Senate Bill 1 threatens to undermine vaccine education and public health. I urge you to reconsider the provisions of this bill that impose neutrality on controversial topics. Let us work together to ensure that our universities remain places of free inquiry and robust education, where students can receive accurate and comprehensive information about vaccines and other critical public health issues.

Thank you for your time and consideration.