

Testimony opposing Sb 1

My name is Jawhara Qutiefan

A true democracy encourages debate, not forced neutrality. This is the United States of America, where the First Amendment, the very first one, guarantees our right to speak freely, to challenge ideas, and to engage in open discussion. SB 1 directly contradicts these constitutional protections. It is a dangerous attempt to police speech, censor classrooms, and prevent open discourse on issues that shape our society.

When you silence discussions on race, gender, systemic inequality, LGBTQ+ rights, climate change, foreign policy, and global justice issues like Palestine, you are attacking free speech in the classroom and universities. You are attacking the free speech of professors, students, and the very institutions meant to foster critical thinking and innovation.

This critical thinking is what allows us to make ground breaking research that has made Ohio one of the leading places in the world for research. Ohio State's social psychology program is always in the top 10 spots in the country and the world; the department has produced numerous influential studies, and some notable examples include research on topics like stereotyping, persuasion, and attitudes. Which this bill will not allow or limit.

SB 1 will turn our institutions of higher learning into places of fear and compliance, rather than intellectual growth and open inquiry. Professors will be forced to censor their own lectures. Students will hesitate to ask difficult questions. This is not freedom. This is authoritarian control over education. Ohio will no longer be a place that welcomes professors and students who value free thought—Ohio will be living in a government-dictated, fascist state where education is controlled, not cultivated.

SB 1 is not about protecting students or higher education; it is about controlling it. That is the very definition of government overreach and a direct attack on the freedoms we hold dear.

I can personally attest to the power of open discourse in the classroom. Some of the most transformative learning experiences I've had have been with professors and peers who challenged my views, forcing me to think critically, defend my beliefs, and grow intellectually. If SB 1 had been in place, those conversations may never have happened.

I urge you to reconsider your support for SB 1. If you truly value free speech, democracy, educational excellence, and American values, you must oppose any policies that limit them. Reject SB 1 and protect the future of higher education in Ohio.