

Testimony of Katlyn Barcroft
Before the House High Education Committee
Representative Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025

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

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide written testimony in regard to Senate Bill 1. My name is Katlyn Barcroft. I am a lifelong resident of Ohio, currently residing in Hilliard, Ohio with my family. I am a registered voter, a mother of two, brilliant daughters, a supporter of public education, and I strongly oppose SB 1 and its companion bill, HB 6.

As stated above, I have two daughters, Keira who is 11 yr old and in 5th grade, and Kali, an 18 yr old first-year student at Miami University, where she is studying Political Science and serves as the President of Miami's chapter of the Ohio Student Association. After completing her undergraduate degree, she plans to continue her education in law school in preparation for her lifelong career goal of practicing civil rights law. A career in civil rights law requires great respect for and working knowledge of topics such as employment discrimination, ethics, social issues, and legal theory, disability rights, and the rights of the LGBTQ+ community.

Senate Bill 1 would make it impossible for my daughter to receive the education necessary for her intended career ambitions from any public college or university within the state of Ohio! My daughter loves learning, and she loves the law; she has from a very early age! She chose to attend Miami University for its abundant offerings of diverse curriculum, student organizations focused around her chosen area of study, and for the opportunity to grow as a person under the brilliant guidance and instruction of Miami University's well-respected professors and esteemed faculty. SB 1 would eliminate everything she needs and wants in her undergraduate studies, not only in Miami University, but within all of Ohio's public colleges and universities!

All areas of study, not just political science, would be impacted by SB1! Medical fields, teaching degrees, historical studies on all levels, journalism, psychology, foreign policy and global relations just to name a few, would struggle to exist as accredited programs under SB1. If faculty cannot teach information that may infer a preference or side taken, these fields of study will in no way adequately provide the preparation and/or education to ensure degrees earned from Ohio's public institutes of high learning are legitimate or respectably preparatory. Ultimately our state will lose a far too many young adults to other states that can provide them with the freedom to learn and grow that Ohio will no longer be capable of offering.

Colleges and universities are entrusted with the immensely crucial responsibility of equipping young adults with the essential skills and knowledge necessary for students to become responsible citizens who make positive contributions to their communities and society as a whole. To achieve this, these institutions of higher learning must have the freedom to venture into all facets of the human experience, even if it means confronting topics that may make some individuals feel uneasy. If throughout a student's years studying to achieve an undergraduate degree at their college or university of their choosing, and they're not permitted to freely engage in controversial topics with

one another (professors and faculty included) in the educational setting, upon graduating how will the student have the capability and confidence to not just thrive but simply survive in the real world? This world we live in grows increasingly controversial and uncomfortable with every moment that passes! Educators must be given the freedom to properly prepare students for this very messy, diverse world without the fear of prosecution or punishment! Our students deserve that, and our world is in desperate need of capable, prepared, strong leaders!

Senate Bill 1 would essentially place a gag order on all educational faculty who teach at any/all of Ohio's public colleges and universities. This would not only limit the extent to which these institutions are able to provide students with an appropriate and effective education, but it would greatly disable these academic institutions from preparing students for any sort of a future beyond their academic pursuits that would be responsible or adequate at minimum.

Academic freedom on a collegiate level is absolutely essential as it allows our students to learn and our teachers to teach without fear to communicate openly. Additionally, decisions regarding curriculum must be based on a legitimate academic foundation, not popularity, politics, or personal preferences. Academic freedom at its core is far more important than any individual topic discussed in the classroom, required reading assigned by a professor, or stance voiced by a member of an institution's faculty.

When state lawmakers involve their own interests in what should be reserved for purely academic affairs, they not only undermine the quality of education but also potentially risk violating First Amendment rights of both faculty and students. The integrity of higher education necessitates respect for First Amendment rights and academic freedom, and legislators who truly care about education and its impact on our future understand that.

I ask you to consider my testimony, think beyond the disabling effects ths Bill would have on not just Higher Education alone, but instead try to envision the many ways this Bill would negatively impact Ohio as a whole. PLEASE vote NO on this terribly disabling and damaging Bill!

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide my written testimony!

Sincerely,

Katlyn Barcroft