

**Opponent Testimony for Senate Bill 1
House Committee on Higher Education
March 10, 2025
Submitted by Ohio citizen Julia Kay Coughlin**

Attention Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

I write today to share my opposition to and deep concerns about Senate Bill 1. This bill raises significant apprehensions regarding its potential impact on academic freedom, diversity, the overall educational experience in Ohio, and the ability of Ohio's educational institutions to continue to positively impact our state economy.

As a lifelong Ohio citizen and taxpayer committed to the well-being and education of my fellow residents, I am greatly troubled by the implications of Senate Bill 1. Despite its purported goal of enhancing higher education, there are aspects of this bill that, in my opinion, pose a threat to the principles of inclusivity and academic freedom that are crucial to providing a comprehensive and enriching education. Additionally, this bill jeopardizes workers' rights for academic teaching staff, which is a major step backwards in protecting the humanity and human needs of all people involved in the education experience.

Senate Bill 1, in its current form, appears to prohibit critical thinking on certain topics and training methods, referred to with an alarming vagueness that appears to be a direct pathway to censorship at Ohio educational institutions. This would limit the range of academic exploration, hinder innovative thinking in research, and restrict students' exposure to free and fair discourse on a broad range of perspectives and complex issues.

If Ohio wants to remain a leader in the research and innovation that drives so much of our state economy today, academic staff must retain the freedom to pursue fair contracts. Removing (or even limiting) the ability of academic staff to organize and pursue collective bargaining is a threat to the health and well-being of faculty, staff and students alike. The prohibitions against collective bargaining and job protections, as stated in the current version of SB1, would have the effect of causing Ohio state institutions of higher learning to be far less competitive for academic and research talent.

In conclusion, I urge the committee to carefully consider this bill's potential to make Ohio far less attractive for students, faculty, and researchers. This will negatively impact the competitiveness, diversity and vibrancy of our educational institutions, which will have a chilling effect on the economy and well-being of our state.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and hope that you prioritize the preservation of academic freedom, inclusivity and workers' rights within Ohio's higher education system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.