

Testimony of Sydney Ball

For the House Higher 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 reading my testimony today. My name is Sydney Ball. I am a Senior in the Fisher College of Business at The Ohio State University. I am strongly opposed to SB 1.

During my time at Ohio State, I have never once felt indoctrinated by the "woke left" faculty that this bill is supposedly targeting. Although much of my coursework has been outside the "controversial topics" listed in the bill, I've still taken a variety of general education courses. In these courses, I've had the opportunity to engage in discussions about the Holocaust, different religions, climate change, Spanish culture, and geopolitical conflicts, such as Israel and Hamas. My professors have always encouraged open and respectful conversations, allowing students to explore these topics without fear of judgment. I've participated in many enlightening discussions where I felt heard and respected. I've never felt that anyone was made to feel ashamed for their opinions or beliefs.

I believe Senate Bill 1 does the opposite of what it intends. You want to protect free speech in classrooms? Then allow professors to continue doing what they've always done—teach. After speaking with fellow students concerned about faculty retention, I know that we do not need to give professors any more reasons not to come to Ohio State. This bill would be costly, harmful, and lead our public universities in the wrong direction.

It seems that the 'silent majority' of students in support of this bill is not as large as some claim. At the first testimony hearing for this bill, only two students spoke: one student from Boston and one from Dayton University - a private school and an out-of-state school. This is contrasted by 500+ people who gave testimony at the hearing for SB-83, many of whom were Ohio public university students.

Furthermore, I know many students who wouldn't be able to afford their education without scholarships like the Morrill scholarship, which would be eradicated by this bill. We should be working to make education more affordable, not less.

Additionally, students should have the right to pursue their passions, regardless of how popular their field of study may be. For example, a friend of mine is studying Greek, and some of her classes only have a few students. Does that make the content any less important; her passion any less real?

Many students I know wouldn't have chosen to attend a public university in Ohio if this bill had been in effect when they applied. Do you want more Ohio students to go out of state? Do you want enrollment to drop? I don't think you do, and neither do I. So, I urge you to listen to your constituents, especially us students, and to hear us when we say we do not want this bill.

Look at the number of students who have shown up at the statehouse this year to ask you to vote no on this bill. Look at how many of us came out for SB-83! We are begging you to listen and to trust us when we tell you that this bill would do far more harm than good.

Please consider my testimony and vote no on this detrimental and dangerous bill. Thank you for taking the time to read my words.