

## **Testimony of Devon Rancourt**

Before the House Higher Education Committee

Representative Tom Young, Chair

**March 11, 2025**

Good morning. Thank you, Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee for reading my testimony. My name is Devon Rancourt, and I am writing to urge you to vote NO on Senate Bill 1.

I am currently a master's student in Slavic Studies at The Ohio State University, and I specifically chose to study there due to the program's excellence and the faculty whose research interests are similar to my own. Furthermore, I selected OSU due to the abundance of resources available and the opportunity to pursue a funded master's degree in my field. I am highly satisfied with the education I have received thus far and have benefited greatly from working with OSU professors. However, if Senate Bill 1 is passed, I fear for the quality of my education going forward. This bill will not ensure the intellectual diversity it promotes. Instead, important conversations about controversial topics in the classroom will be stifled. I am not interested in learning in such a classroom environment, and future students will not be, either.

Senate Bill 1 will cause significant damage to public institutions of higher education in Ohio, harming both their reputation and finances. Students will inevitably choose to avoid Ohio and pursue higher education elsewhere, harming public universities' ability to both recruit and keep talented individuals. These future students will not invest their money in Ohio. Although I am quite happy with my master's program, I will no longer be able to recommend OSU to prospective students in good faith if Senate Bill 1 takes effect, knowing the harm it will cause to

our studies. Additionally, faculty members who bring the university valuable research grants are bound to leave and further their careers in academic institutions that do not restrict their academic freedom. I want to see OSU continue to thrive and offer world-class education to its students, but Senate Bill 1 risks compromising both the university's competitiveness and financial future.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony today. I ask you to take my words to heart and vote NO on this bill before it harms Ohioans' educations and the state's economy.