

Testimony of Christopher Segall, PhD
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Representative Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in writing. My name is Christopher Segall, and I am an Associate Professor of Music Theory at the University of Cincinnati, where I have taught since 2013. I am writing as a private citizen on my own behalf.

While I oppose Senate Bill 1, I understand and appreciate some of the goals it seeks to address, particularly in ensuring that all political viewpoints are respected within the university setting. I agree that it is essential for students and faculty members of all political persuasions to feel valued and heard. As someone who identifies as a leftist, I have always made an effort to actively support and promote projects from students and colleagues with right-leaning viewpoints.

In principle, I am open to the idea of adding a question to student evaluations, such as the one proposed in Senate Bill 1: “Does the faculty member create a classroom atmosphere free of political, racial, gender, and religious bias?” (lines 929–30). However, I have significant concerns about the stipulation in the bill that student evaluations must “account for at least twenty-five per cent of the teaching area component” of faculty evaluations (lines 976–77). While this could benefit me personally, as my evaluations routinely receive the highest possible scores, I believe the potential risks of this measure far outweigh its advantages.

The core issue is that this provision places too much power in the hands of students, potentially opening the door to misuse. Although the bill aims to reduce political bias, the reality is that students might rate professors poorly for reasons unrelated to bias, such as dissatisfaction with grades, homework assignments, or personal conflicts. Moreover, student evaluations are anonymous and not easily verifiable, meaning they could be manipulated or even fabricated. This would create a dangerous precedent where a professor’s job security is tied to unreliable data that can be influenced by factors beyond the classroom environment.

Instead of legislative mandates and surveillance, I believe that a better approach to addressing political bias in higher education would be through dialogue and collaboration. I recommend that we, as faculty members, be involved in crafting solutions. One productive step would be offering professional development opportunities where faculty can learn strategies for ensuring that all students, regardless of political ideology, are respected, able to contribute to open discussion, and not censored or self-censored. This kind of training would promote long-term positive change in the culture of Ohio’s higher education institutions.

As it currently stands, Senate Bill 1 risks creating unintended consequences that could harm both faculty and students. For this reason, I strongly oppose the bill in its present form. However, if

the bill moves forward, I urge you to remove the provision that mandates student evaluations account for 25% of faculty teaching assessments.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Christopher Segall, PhD

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