

Testimony of Matthew Wu, Ph.D.
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
March 11, 2025

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

My name is Matthew Wu, and I am an Assistant Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry at The Ohio State University where I have taught for two years. I do not represent The Ohio State University but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

Every day, we inch further away from the principles that undergird a democratic society. Despite overwhelming majority in terms of opposing testimonies received by the Senate, here we are again where we are desperately clawing for acknowledgment within the House. I again reiterate: a society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they shall never sit. Due to recent socio-political events, the US is rapidly spinning further away from the underlying messages of this proverb. The state of higher education is being actively dismantled and poised to regress with the restrictions of SB 1. Most alarmingly, this bill mocks and threatens the very civil liberties that led to the founding of this country. We are doomed for irreparable short- *and* long-term loss if this bill passes.

We must come to an understanding that education fundamentally cannot be “value-free.” There is no such thing as objectivity in education. What, how, and why we learn and teach depends on what humans value in said society. By removing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice, we are dangerously admitting policies of marginalization to be more worthwhile in our institutes. How we have come to this point where people want to **selectively ignore** American history is baffling. Not learning from prior transgressions while avoiding the call to do better is literally childish. Other modern countries would not dare to cripple their academia, and those that have model an oppressive trajectory whose path we are following.

SB 1 will transform all Ohio institutions into sink holes where aspirations cannot be achieved. How will we attract students and instructors when we present education to be meaningful for some, but not for all? How can we recruit the brightest researchers if intellectual freedom and job security is no longer institutionally promised? Much like how learning occurs via conceptual change, we cannot advance as a society if we choose to dismiss past errors and failures. We must recognize these historical and ongoing fascist violations of civil liberties to warrant the present need for remediation and improvement. SB 1 cannot pass. Higher education becomes meaningless when it no longer serves *everyone* in their intellectual and moral growth. Planting trees is moot if only a select few in the future can enjoy their shade. There may not even be trees worth planting once democracy is lost and higher education institutes are permanently destroyed. Please do your job, and champion the values of freedom upon which this country was founded.