

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce & Higher Education Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is MK Lamkin, and I am a worker who has benefitted greatly from Ohio's education system. It has provided me discipline, knowledge, support and access to opportunity. Senate Bill 1 aims to destroy such opportunities for countless Ohio residents. This dangerous overreach undermines Ohio's higher education system and economy. This bill does not strengthen Ohio's universities—it weakens them, placing ideological restrictions on intellectual exploration, workforce development, and the pursuit of truth. Voting “no” on this short-sighted legislation is a “yes” for Ohio residents now and in the future.

This bill's consequences are deeply concerning, particularly given that many of its supporters claim to stand with working people. Businesses rely on our universities to cultivate a highly skilled, diverse workforce—something this bill directly jeopardizes. The very legislators who champion Ohio's potential as the “Silicon Heartland” must recognize that innovation thrives in environments that embrace inclusion, not exclusion. Erasing tough history and reality does not level the playing field; it tilts it further in favor of those who already have built-in advantages, making Ohio a less attractive place for top students, faculty, and employers.

Supporters of this bill claim it eliminates “divisive concepts,” but in reality it imposes political control over institutions that should remain centers of free thought and rigorous inquiry. Rather than reduce bias in higher education, it restricts universities' ability to address real-world issues, engage with diverse perspectives, and prepare students for the complexities of the modern workforce.

Ohio's future depends on strong, independent universities that attract talent, foster innovation, and contribute to economic growth. S.B. 1 threatens all of that. I urge this committee to stand for academic freedom, for workforce development, and for the future of Ohio by opposing this harmful legislation.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

MK Lamkin
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