

Statement of Abigail Burger  
In Opposition to Senate Bill 1

Before the House of Representatives Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Representative Tom Young, Chair

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio and other members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to present opponent testimony regarding the proposed Senate Bill 1: the Advance Ohio Higher Education Act.

My name is Abigail Burger, and I am a student at Bowling Green State University. I am speaking today on my own behalf and not on behalf of my university.

As an out of state student, I chose Ohio schools with expectation that I would be receiving an education that promotes critical thinking and open classroom discussion, and so far, I feel I have received that. However, the Advance Ohio Higher Education Act undermines the values of academic freedom, critical thinking, and inclusive dialogue that brought me to Ohio in the first place.

This bill will have a detrimental effect on the success of Ohio higher education institutions, which will negatively impact the entire state. The union busting and other anti-faculty provisions in this bill will drive our most qualified professors out of the state as they will seek employment somewhere that supports them, rather than limits and silences them. Students will choose schools that promote open discussion on the controversial topics of our time, rather than institutions that shy away from them out of fear of punishment from the state. They will choose schools that support the well-being of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusions programs, and schools that continue to provide DEI scholarships.

I personally was hoping to continue my education in Ohio after I graduate and receive a Master of Public Administration from BGSU, OSU, or another institution in Ohio. However, if this bill is passed, I will seek to continue my education elsewhere. I do not want my academic experience to be limited legislators who think that those in higher education are not intelligent enough to think for themselves and refuse to continue to support the success of a state that does not support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts nor the well-being of its higher education faculty.

Although I am just one student, I can tell you that this sentiment is shared by many students currently enrolled in OH higher education, and that if this bill is passed OH will see firsthand the consequences of undermining higher education.

Higher education is the foundation of future success. These institutions prepare the next workforce to be best equipped to serve their communities after they graduate. When you work to undermine and limit OH higher education, like this bill would do, you are ultimately

undermining and limiting the future success of this state. Without the next generation of students, Ohio will become stagnant and fall behind other states.

I urge you all to strongly oppose SB 1, and to stop it in committee before it reaches the house floor. The future of Ohio is dependent on it. Thank you.