

Testimony of Beth Ash  
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee  
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair  
10 February, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Cirino, Ranking Member Ingram, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Beth Ash, and I am a retired professor, Emerita Faculty of English at the University of Cincinnati where I taught for thirty years. I do not represent the University of Cincinnati but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

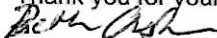
Senate Bill 1 should be renamed the "Destruction of Higher Education Bill", since that is exactly what will occur if the bill is passed. As I see it, the university should be a place of open inquiry and critical thought, so that students have the capacity to reflect on the issues that confront them as citizens. Senate B1 will have the chilling effect of turning all learning into robotic performances based on arbitrary rules. We don't need human automatons, we already have AI.

I recently ran into a former student at Findlay Market in the Over the Rhine neighborhood. I didn't recognize her, but she recognized me and stopped me expressly to explain that she found my class in women's literature and feminist theory inspiring, allowing her to dream, and conceptually rigorous. She told me that she had become a teacher herself because of that class. This is beneficial modeling, allowing people to see new possibilities for themselves—to grow spiritually, morally, and intellectually. Senate B1 will drastically reduce the number of gifted instructors; only people who cannot get a teaching job elsewhere will stay in Ohio.

Further, the flagship universities are going to be hollowed out—first, by decreasing academic freedom, second, by diminishing research funds (based only on legislatively sanctioned areas), and third, by effectively ruining the tenure system (with constant legal violations of due process rights for faculty)—and this, in turn, can only lead to a much-diminished state of Ohio. Eventually, there will be no difference between our once proud and prosperous state and an educationally backward and impoverished state like Mississippi.

Senators may think that they are improving the university system, and by extension, the state. However, in my view, this kind of thinking is short sighted and deeply misguided.

Thank you for your consideration,

  
Beth Ash