

Testimony of Dr. Michael Koop, PhD. Physics
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 Dr. Michael Koop, and I am a Professor of Instruction in Physics & Astronomy at Ohio University Chillicothe, where I have taught for nine years. I do not represent Ohio University or the Chillicothe campus but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1.

SB1, while claiming to promote “Intellectual Diversity” and prohibit “indoctrination” of “Controversial Beliefs or Policies”, will do exactly the opposite, simultaneously restricting evidence-based scientific topics and potentially opening a floodgate of pseudoscientific noise into classrooms that must be considered as a “divergent and varied perspective”. The core principle of scientific critical thinking is that not all claims are equal, and that we should proportion our confidence in a claim to the strength of the evidence that has withstood peer review. SB1 would allow any student that comes in with a belief held for any reason, to demand that their position be considered and derail the class, under the threat of forcing an inquiry upon the instructor.

I often bring up pseudoscientific claims in my class, demonstrating how they either lack supporting evidence or have directly disconfirming evidence against them. In the language of SB1, this could be seen as “endorsing or opposing [a] controversial belief or policy” or an “attempt to indoctrinate”. This isn’t indoctrination, it is simply the process of science. I make the same demands for evidence when discussing any scientific principle. SB1 Proponents might claim that the bill allows for “professional judgement” but immediately undermines this by forbidding discussion of the sciences of climate change, women’s health, and social sciences.

Would you want a surgeon operating on you who didn’t sterilize their equipment because they don’t believe in germ theory? Or board a plane piloted by someone who thought they had a better flight path because they think the Earth is flat? Or take financial advice from someone who consulted your horoscopes instead of market trends? Do you think Intel, or Honda, or Google, or other companies are going to want to invest in Ohio and hire Ohio workers if their own state government is actively undermining their academic training?

The topics for which freedom of thought and scientific inquiry are permitted cannot be chosen a la carte. Discoveries and innovations are made by those of us who have the courage and fortitude to follow the evidence wherever it leads, unrestricted by political or ideological preconceptions. The charge of this legislative body is to represent the will of the people. I

look around a see a wealth of evidence, presented by all these hard-working individuals and the groups they represent, that the people do not support SB1, especially those who would be most affected by it. I urge this committee to vote no on Senate Bill 1.