

Testimony of Madison Chapman, History PhD Student at Ohio State University  
Before the Senate Higher Education Committee  
Senator Kristina Roegner, Chair  
February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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

My name is Madison Chapman, and I am a history PhD student at the Ohio State University where I earned my bachelor's degree in history. Having decided to continue my education, I am now in the history program at OSU to obtain my master's and PhD. I do not represent the Ohio State University but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1. As a native Ohioan and proud Buckeye, I cannot express enough how harmful SB 1 would be to higher education.

To begin with, the proposed policy on controversial beliefs is too subjective and abstract to be implemented in places of higher education. Many ideas throughout history have been deemed "controversial" by various groups. If we left out these concepts when teaching, we would not be able to teach anything. For example, before Copernicus, the world was thought to be at the center of the universe. This idea was incredibly controversial, and indeed, the book containing Copernicus's heliocentric theory (the theory that the sun is the center of our universe) was published with a preface, that he did not write, saying it was all a thought experiment and not a reality. It was not until decades later that scholars accepted this theory as fact. As this example demonstrates, a large part of our past is built around controversy and debate. To neglect to tell this history, be it one of the past or the present, is to erase our past. We cannot deny that history is full of both good and bad. To understand how we got to where we are today, we must tell the full story.

Furthermore, 6B's requirement that students be allowed to form their own conclusions about these topics leaves room for misbelief and factual inaccuracies. The point of higher education is to become a well-informed and well-rounded citizen. Attainment of these qualities is not possible if students are taught everything with a caveat. Returning once more to the aforementioned example about Copernicus, imagine if we had to preface the end of a lecture about heliocentric theory with "but some people do not believe the sun is the center of the universe and you can form your own conclusion," despite heliocentric theory having been accepted fact for just shy of 500 years. Students may still form their own conclusions, but the purpose of higher education is to teach the truth, not erase it because it does not fit the preferred narrative.

In addition to being opposed to the above sections and to the entire bill, I am especially opposed to DEI bans. Contrary to far-right extremist beliefs, DEI policies make our universities a better place. More perspectives, which the bill seems to call for in section 7 before calling for a ban on the exact programs that promote a true diversity of perspective,

nuance discussions and make academic thought more rigorous, disciplined, and accurate. DEI bans discourage diversity in perspective and isolate those whose voices are too often silenced.

While there are many other issues with SB1, I will end on this note: passing this bill would be a disservice to the people of Ohio. It will eliminate the breadth and diversity needed to produce good citizens who are knowledgeable, compassionate, and eager to further their learning. It will make education less accessible, decreasing literacy in many areas (financial, historical, scientific, general, etc.) and enshrining systemic exclusion of minority groups. Finally, it is a gross encroachment of government power.