

Testimony of Chris Caprette, Ph.D.
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. Chris Caprette, and I am a professor of biology at Cuyahoga Community College (Tri-C,) where I have taught for 14 years. I do not represent Tri-C, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1 (SB1.)

I am trained as a biologist having earned a B.S. and M.S. in biology from Cleveland State University and Ph.D. from the Ohio State University. At both institutions I taught biology as a graduate student. Additionally, I have had experience teaching at Ohio Wesleyan University, Columbus State Community College, and Ohio Northern University. Collectively, I have over 30 years of experience teaching undergraduate biology students. Currently, I teach biological science to undergraduates at Tri-C. Senate Bill 1 is a poor solution in search of a non-existent problem.

The premise upon which much of SB1 is based is the idea that we indoctrinate students. At no point during my time as an undergraduate or graduate student did I experience indoctrination, nor did I witness indoctrination of college students in any of the institutions where I studied and taught. What I did experience in my college education were challenges to my beliefs. I found that some of those beliefs failed to meet those challenges and I abandoned them to my benefit. Some of my beliefs were modified and others reinforced by the things I learned. This is part of becoming a fully-functioning member of society. My students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and have a similarly wide range of beliefs. I have no doubt that the scientific facts and theories I and my colleagues teach in our classes challenge some of their beliefs. We do not require our students accept the ideas we teach on faith, nor do we require them to affirm any belief in them. What we require them to do is learn the facts and theories we teach and to demonstrate that learning. Students are free to dismiss the ideas as false if they conflict with their deeply held beliefs but they still have to show that they learned what those ideas are. After all, it is ridiculous to dismiss an idea without at the very least knowing what the idea says. This is not the same as affirming belief and is the opposite of indoctrination.

This false premise of indoctrination is the basis for the other provisions of SB1 including:

- The attack on diversity, equity, and inclusion,
- The attack on collective bargaining rights,
- The onerous reporting requirements.

The first two of those will drive away the best and brightest of our students and cause teaching and research faculty to seek employment in other states to their mutual benefit and Ohio's loss. The latter is an unfunded mandate as SB1 has no provision for funding the reporting which will require additional administration in already top heavy institutions. Instead of blowing political dog whistles and beating strawmen, the Ohio legislature should be tackling real problems at our public higher educational institutions, such as crumbling infrastructure and chronic under funding.

Thank you, I am willing to answer any questions you may have.