

Testimony of Elizabeth M. Smith-Pryor, J.D., 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 Elizabeth Smith-Pryor, and I am a professor of History at Kent State University where I have taught since the fall of 2001. I do not represent Kent State University but rather I am submitting testimony in opposition to SB 1 as a private citizen.

First, as a long-time faculty member of Kent State's faculty union, I completely oppose the provision in SB1 that maintains that faculty unions cannot bargain over workload, retrenchment, evaluations, and tenure. Removing the ability to bargain over these issues essentially turns Ohio's public university faculty into at-will employees without any real job protections. **This is union-busting.**

Second, this bill will expose Ohio's faculty to unsubstantiated complaints about restricting "intellectual diversity" in the classroom. **Faculty will spend hours responding to unsubstantiated and evidence-free complaints instead of spending those same hours preparing classes, grading assignments, and mentoring students.** The quality of education will suffer in Ohio's public universities if the classroom is turned into an antagonistic environment instead of a place of engaged learning.

Similarly, I am also extremely concerned by the bill's requirements that relate to course syllabi especially the demand syllabi be made accessible online to the public. ***I have seen no explanation behind the requirement for doing so and fail to see any connection with the claim of promoting open intellectual inquiry.*** I am very worried that the public posting of syllabi could lead to physical harm against faculty and students in a class. **Despite the language in the bill providing that the location and time/day of courses does not need to appear in publicly posted syllabi, that information is not difficult to find. I am surprised the state legislature intends to expose hardworking teachers and college students to the possibility of physical harm while learning.** Only two years ago a recent graduate of the University of Waterloo in Canada went into a gender studies classroom and stabbed the professor and two students. Fortunately, no one was killed.  
<https://www.ctvnews.ca/kitchener/article/it-was-me-video-shows-moment-university-of-waterloo-attacker-admits-to-triple-stabbing/>

Similarly, the requirement that syllabi be made accessible online to the public will lead to online harassment of instructors. **The legislature needs to recognize one consequence of this bill will be to subject instructors in Ohio's public colleges and universities to the**

**possibility of receiving threatening and harassing emails and other forms of online harassment.**

I am especially concerned since the subjects I teach at Kent State, including African American History and Women's History, are likely to be targeted by outside extremists. For more than the past two decades, I have been deeply committed to providing the highest quality education to Ohio's students in all my undergraduate and graduate courses. The topics I teach are critically important to fully understanding our nation's past. We do ourselves and our posterity a disservice by making these subjects more difficult to teach accurately. Unfortunately, if SB 1 passes, and given the historical topics I teach, if I find myself subject to online harassment and trolling or worse, I will have to reconsider whether I can afford to teach and live in a hostile environment like Ohio.

Finally, I am also **concerned by the efforts to eliminate diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at state universities.** Let's be clear about what this is really about—this is a call to segregate Ohio's public universities, a call to deny underrepresented students and others equal opportunities by returning to a time when racial and other forms of discrimination was either state-supported or customary.

Respectfully, I ask that you reject this bill, which will, in addition to the issues I have raised here, only lead to real, irreversible damage to Ohio's higher education with a long-term impact on the state's ability to economically compete with states that don't undermine the integrity of valuable public goods like public colleges and universities.