

Testimony of Allie Mickle
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 Allie Mickle, and I am a PhD student at the Ohio State University (OSU), where I have been a student for almost seven years and a Graduate Teaching Associate for 5 years. I do not represent OSU, but rather am submitting testimony as a private citizen in opposition to Senate Bill 1 (SB1).

The fact that this Bill was fast-tracked through the Senate without listening to and addressing the concerns listed in the hundreds of testimonies submitted is extremely upsetting. The House has the opportunity to slow down and approach this Bill more carefully while listening to constituents, students, and other relevant parties.

At heart, this is a highly partisan Bill that seeks to target 'DEI' without a clear definition of what DEI is or understanding of what DEI initiatives actually do. The ban of DEI, the unclear language around 'controversial beliefs or policies,' and the introduction of faculty evaluations introduces a dangerous level of censorship and government oversight into classrooms, offices, and research. This would create a harmful precedent for partisan censorship in higher education as well as present a massive overstep of government regulation and micromanagement, especially when threatening the removal of funds.

Beyond targeting DEI initiatives, this Bill introduces policies that would create one of the most restrictive tenure policies in the nation. This would make it extremely difficult for universities and colleges in Ohio to attract and retain high-caliber faculty, which would impact the recruitment of strong graduate students, who help make the university functional as graduate TAs; the rigour of academic research, which impacts the money brought into the state through grants; and the development of impactful curricula, which would harm the post-graduate success of all students.

The current form of SB 1 is far too broad in its coverage to be considered fair legislation introduced in good faith. Under the attention-grabbing language of a 'DEI ban', the details and scope of the many other elements it introduces are more easily overlooked. The Bill contains at least 25 different issue areas which would create an unprecedented number of unworkable mandates and policies, most of which are simply more burdensome versions of what Ohio's colleges and universities already do. Giving administrators, faculty, and the chancellor more unfunded busywork takes away from student learning, research development, and adds to bureaucratic costs. None of this advances higher education.

I am firmly opposed to this Bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.