

Testimony of Haidy Kamel, Ph.D.
Before the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee
Rep. Tom Young, Chair
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Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Higher Education Committee:

My name is Haidy Kamel and I am an associate professor of chemistry at Cuyahoga Community College, where I have taught for 13 years. I serve as the President of the American Association of University Professors, Tri-C Chapter.

Tri-C is the largest community college in Northeast Ohio and the oldest community college in the state of Ohio. Our students come from diverse backgrounds, balancing full-time jobs, family responsibilities, and financial challenges. Many are seeking career changes after years in the workforce. We serve working adults, veterans, first-generation college students, and historically underrepresented groups. Regardless of their individual paths, what all students need is experienced, committed faculty who teach, mentor, advise, and provide the support necessary to guide them to success.

The real effect of SB1 will be to weaken faculty retention, creating an environment of instability and driving experienced educators away from Ohio. Faculty retention has already been a challenge, especially in high-demand fields like STEM. The American Association of Community Colleges reported that “community colleges face enormous challenges as they strive to find and retain qualified educators in the high-demand STEM fields.” Tri-C is no stranger to these challenges; we are already struggling to recruit faculty in critical areas like the School of Nursing and Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering. This bill will make attracting and retaining faculty even more difficult.

Why? Faculty retention depends on several key factors, including job security, academic freedom, competitive working conditions, and institutional support—all of which will be undermined by this bill. SB1’s attacks on tenure, collective bargaining, and academic governance directly jeopardize our ability to recruit and retain the expert faculty needed to maintain the high-quality programs that our students and employers rely on.

SB1 threatens academic freedom, creating an atmosphere of surveillance. Imagine faculty who must choose between teaching truthfully and keeping their jobs. Imagine a classroom where faculty hesitate to discuss and answer questions about public health, climate change, or economic policy for fear of political and financial punishments. The result? A brain drain, as faculty flee to states where they can teach without fear.

This will also weaken Ohio’s workforce. Community colleges are economic engines that power Ohio’s industries and fill critical workforce gaps. We provide training for in-demand careers in healthcare, advanced manufacturing, IT, and other high-growth fields. But workforce development does not happen in a vacuum. It requires long-term faculty who understand industry needs and can develop programs that align with employer expectations. Faculty across all disciplines—whether in the sciences, humanities, or social sciences—help students develop the ability to analyze information, engage in meaningful discourse, and adapt to a rapidly changing world. Faculty build relationships with local businesses, creating apprenticeship opportunities and fostering collaborations that directly benefit students and employers alike.

When faculty positions are destabilized, our ability to maintain these partnerships is weakened, and our workforce pipeline suffers. If SB1 drives out experienced faculty, it will mean fewer trained

graduates entering the workforce. Businesses will relocate to states with stronger higher education systems. Ohio will lose talent. Ohio will lose revenue.

Ohio cannot afford this bill. We cannot afford to turn our classrooms into spaces of fear rather than inquiry. We cannot afford to lose experienced educators, weaken our workforce pipeline, and destabilize our colleges. SB1 threatens not just the academic integrity of our institutions but the very economic foundation of Ohio's future.

I urge you not to advance this bill. The cost to our students, workforce, and state is too high. Let us protect the integrity and success of higher education in Ohio.