

Testimony of Mark C. Vopat, Ph.D.

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Before the Senate Workforce and Higher Education Committee

Representative Tom Young, Chair

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Chair Young, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and Members of the Ohio House of Representatives Workforce and Higher Education Committee: My name is Mark Vopat. I am a professor of Philosophy and the President of the Youngstown State University Faculty Union representing over 300 full-time faculty. I am testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 1 (SB1). r

SB1 is an attack on collective bargaining rights that will not only affect faculty, but will also have an impact on the quality of higher education in Ohio. Although the sponsors of the bill claim it does not end tenure, the bill does remove the ability of faculty to negotiate on all issues dealing with faculty review and retrenchment. Without any say in their terms of employment, all policies regarding the firing of faculty is determined by the board of trustees of one's institution. When you couple that provision with the anti-strike clause, faculty have little to no recourse for unfair or unjust treatment.

How will this affect students? By removing the protection tenure affords, Ohio's institutions of higher education will have trouble attracting and retaining high quality faculty—faculty who are far more likely to opt for the greater job security offered to them by other schools in other states that respect tenure.

Tenure is not, nor has it ever been a guarantee of employment. What it does guarantee is that a faculty member cannot be dismissed from the university without cause, and that the causes are negotiated in a just and fair manner.

Also, make no mistake, SB1 is also about indoctrination— indoctrination and control. It is an example of blatant government overreach and micromanagement of the university (something Democrats, Republicans, and Independents should be wary). Further, it constitutes state-imposed censorship of what occurs in the university classroom, and will have a chilling effect on academic freedom and freedom of expression.

State Senator Jerry Cirino the architect of the bill, along with its supporters, have claimed that it is necessary to counter the “woke” indoctrination that has taken over our institutions of higher education. I say “claimed” since no evidence of this has ever been presented.

The idea that a “balance” of ideas is needed rings hollow given the context in which higher education operates in Ohio. As it stands, conservatives have supermajorities in the State House, Senate, Governor’s office, and Supreme Court. The board of trustees at every Ohio public university were appointed by Republican governors, and every university president was hired by those same boards.

SB1 is a solution looking for a problem. It will hurt students; it will hurt faculty; it will hurt higher education as a whole in Ohio. I urge the committee to vote against this legislation.