

I am writing this testimony to strongly oppose Senate Bill 1. I am an educator in Kent State University's Animation and Game Design program, and a member of the Ohio Game Development Leadership Committee, which comprises professionals and educators from across the state. I have been working in games and animation since 2007, have won multiple awards for my work, and written several books on the topic. I am also a born-and-raised Ohioan. After years working on the east coast, I chose to come back to Ohio both because the growing independent creator community and to bring my knowledge back to help people in the state find the same opportunities I have. In the past 8 years, I have worked with my awesome colleagues to grow our program into one of the top 50 game development programs in the entire country, an honor also shared by other schools in the country. We have been able to place students in industry jobs both nationally and within the state, and are working with other Ohio-based organizations to continue to grow opportunities for Ohio students and professionals.

All of this is impressive, but requires an environment that would support our work, and the need to grow these initiatives by bringing in new and talented professionals and faculty members. SB1 directly endangers this effort and may stymie it completely. SB1 removes labor protections for faculty members within the state of Ohio such as their ability to strike and take place in shared governance. It also vastly reduces tenure protections. All of this will make faculty positions in Ohio unattractive to the kind of talented and experienced professionals that we want to bring into the state to help us further increase opportunities for the forward-looking industries we serve. Likewise, all of this sets a bad precedent for labor in other disciplines - who is to say that their ability to collectively bargain and strike is safe after a bill like this passes? Over the past few weeks, students from multiple Ohio colleges have told members of the press that they would be unwilling to continue their education in Ohio, and would go to other states for graduate schools. In a field where we are trying to keep talented people in the state, this would severely limit, if not destroy, growth. Students and potential faculty will not want to come to a place where they cannot have reasonable labor protections and job benefits, when they could go to Pennsylvania or...dare I say...Michigan...to be a part of their also-growing independent creator and educational technology communities.

SB1 would be a disaster for the growing tech, digital art, and animation push in the state of Ohio, and for labor more broadly. I strongly oppose this bill, and hope that those that represent us in the Ohio House will do the same thing and oppose it as well.

Christopher W. Totten, M.Arch

Associate Professor

Program Coordinator - Animation Game Design

Kent State Tuscarawas

