

## **Opponent Testimony for SB1: Advance Ohio Higher Education Act**

Jerry C. Cirino, Andrew O. Brenner, Brian M. Chavez, Al Cutrona, Terry Johnson, Kyle Koehler, George F. Lang, Susan Manchester, Sandra O'Brien, Bill Reineke, Kristina D. Roegner, Mark Romanchuk, Tim Schaffer, Shane Wilkin

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Christine Wolken

Ms. Roegner, Mr. Cirino, Mr. Brenner, Mr. Chavez, Mr. Cutrona, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Koehler, Mr. Lang, Ms. Manchester, Ms. O'Brien, Mr. Reineke, Mr. Romanchuk, Mr. Schaffer, and Mr. Wilkin,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Christine Wolken. I am an Ohio citizen, born and raised in Medina County and currently reside in Cuyahoga County. I am the mother of three children and a proud educator in this state. I strongly oppose SB1 because it is bad for students and will have dire consequences on the education of young people in our state.

My hope is that Ohio remains a state dedicated to the strong education of our young people. As a mom of two children in our local public school and one child at a private college in Ohio and as an educator, this bill strips many of the foundational aspects of education that make colleges and universities in the state of Ohio desirable for students throughout the country and the world. Aspects of this bill, such as the prohibition of all DEI initiatives and the attack on intellectual freedom in the classroom is going to create an environment that is unwelcoming to most of our students in this state, no matter the color, race, religion or gender. In my college classroom, students are and always have been free and welcome to express their ideas and opinions. I have been fortunate to sit on several committees that focus on major issues affecting young people and our state including issues like racism as a public health crisis (stated by our own Governor DeWine in 2020). I am very confused as to why this legislature is denying our very urgent problems in our communities, our state, and our nation where colleges and universities are naturally the place to allow students to investigate, discuss, and improve our systems. I have seen students come to incredible solutions through these programs and initiatives it would be devastating to see that our legislators are denying a younger generation the ability to fix the problems they see in their world and for their future. I urge you to stop the culture war and focus on issues that students are concerned with in their own lives and educational journeys.

As an educator who has spent more than twenty years of her life dedicated to students, I also oppose SB1 which strips some of the most important aspects of our jobs including the tenure process which protects intellectual freedom and collective bargaining which also protects our union rights. A weakened and threatened workforce is not good for students. I urge you to talk with professors and talk with students to see what really happens in our classrooms. I assure you that what is in this bill is harmful, not helpful to our students, our professors, or our state. Ohio has some of the best colleges and universities in the country, and this will not only weaken our ability to do our job but will also hurt our state economically when students and professors no longer want to go to college or work in our state.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions.

