

Testimony Against Ohio SB01

Hello everyone,

The Bowling Green State University Undergraduate Student Government is here today in firm and absolute opposition to Ohio Senate Bill 01 as it seeks to impose undue restrictions on the academic freedom, diversity, and institutional independence of our state's higher education system.

The "Advance Ohio Higher Education Act" is a direct assault on the very foundations of our universities. If passed, this bill would strip institutions of the ability to govern themselves, limit the free exchange of ideas, and impose top-down ideological control over faculty, staff, and students. This bill fundamentally undermines the mission of higher education: to create an environment in which students can engage in free thought, challenge perspectives, and grow into informed, engaged citizens.

The implications of this legislation stretch far beyond our campuses. The elimination of DEI programs and faculty protections will make Ohio's universities less competitive, driving students and faculty to institutions in other states that continue to value academic freedom and inclusivity. Taxpayers see an average of \$4.60 in return on investment for every \$1 spent in higher education. I challenge you to name one program the state funds with that high of a return on investment. If Ohio aims to be a leader in higher education, economic growth, and innovation, it must foster institutions that attract and retain top talent—not legislate them out of existence.

Perhaps most egregiously, this bill was drafted without meaningful input from the very people it will affect the most. This legislation is not about improving higher education—it is about controlling it. If lawmakers truly care about the future of Ohio's colleges and universities, they will listen when we say you, the people we elected to represent our wants and needs, are not doing your due diligence to listen, respect, and vote the way your constituents want. Opponents during last month's Senate committee hearing for SB1 set a record for the most written objections to a bill in the history of the Ohio state legislature and this committee even had to limit opposition testimony to three hours because you knew you could hear complaints all day and into tomorrow.

We urge the members of the Ohio House Workforce and Higher Education Committee to stop this bill in committee and prevent it from moving forward. Should it proceed, we call upon the Ohio House of Representatives to reject this dangerous and harmful piece of legislation. We will not stand idly by as this bill threatens the future of Ohio's higher education system, and we will continue to fight for the academic integrity, inclusivity, and independence of our universities. Remember that it is the people here today in this room that have the power to decide if you return to your seat next term.