

Jordan Tichenor  
March 19, 2025

Chair Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Piccolantonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 1.

My name is Jordan Tichenor, and I am a student at Ashland University. I am a double major in history and political science, and I am also an Ashbrook scholar. For those who may not know, the Ashbrook Scholar program at Ashland University teaches Political Science, History, and Political Economy through intense study of primary sources and seminar-style classes. During my time as a student of the Ashbrook program, I have experienced firsthand the power of civic education through primary sources. It is because of this experience that I feel called to testify here today. I thoroughly believe that the addition of a required American civic literacy course centered around the study of primary sources, as described in Senate Bill One, will have significant positive effects for our students, and for our institutions.

First, it is clear to me, as a current university student in Ohio, that enhanced civics standards are necessary. I have seen firsthand that there is a disturbing lack of civics knowledge among young people. I have interacted with a concerning number of students from Ashland and other universities who have very little knowledge of, or interest in, the process of civics. When questioned why, the most common answer is simply; "it's boring." As a student of political science, I may not see eye to eye with these sentiments, but we need to give these students the benefit of the doubt. We have to admit that the standard way we teach civics is boring. Being forced to memorize dates, term limits, and government structures is far from the most interesting thing that a student could be doing, and the process becomes very tedious for those not interested in Government or civics. I have seen firsthand that primary sources solve this problem by adding depth, meaning, and nuance to civics education.

By studying primary sources, students understand not only how the American government functions, but why it functions the way it does. That “why” is essential to a complete understanding of American institutions. Something as simple as length of terms becomes far more meaningful and interesting when one reads the Federalist Papers, and thus discovers why our founders decided to craft our system the way they did. Voting becomes far more appealing when one reads MLK’s “letter from Birmingham jail,” and thus develops an appreciation for a right that many Americans never got to exercise. Economics becomes interesting when one reads the works of Adam Smith and begins to understand the processes which quietly underpin our economic system. Finally, One begins to truly understand the United States of America by reading the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Gettysburg Address, and other essential primary sources. It is through these primary sources that the magnificence of the American Experiment becomes clear. That is something that can not be learned from a textbook.

The American civic literacy requirement in Senate Bill 1 will provide students with an engaging, meaningful, and nuanced civics class. I believe, as a student who has experienced this type of civics education firsthand, that the wide adoption of these standards will get more young people interested in the process of civics, set Ohioan university students apart, and strengthen our democratic institutions.

For all these reasons and more, I urge you to support Senate Bill 1. Thank you for your time and I’d be happy to answer any questions.

